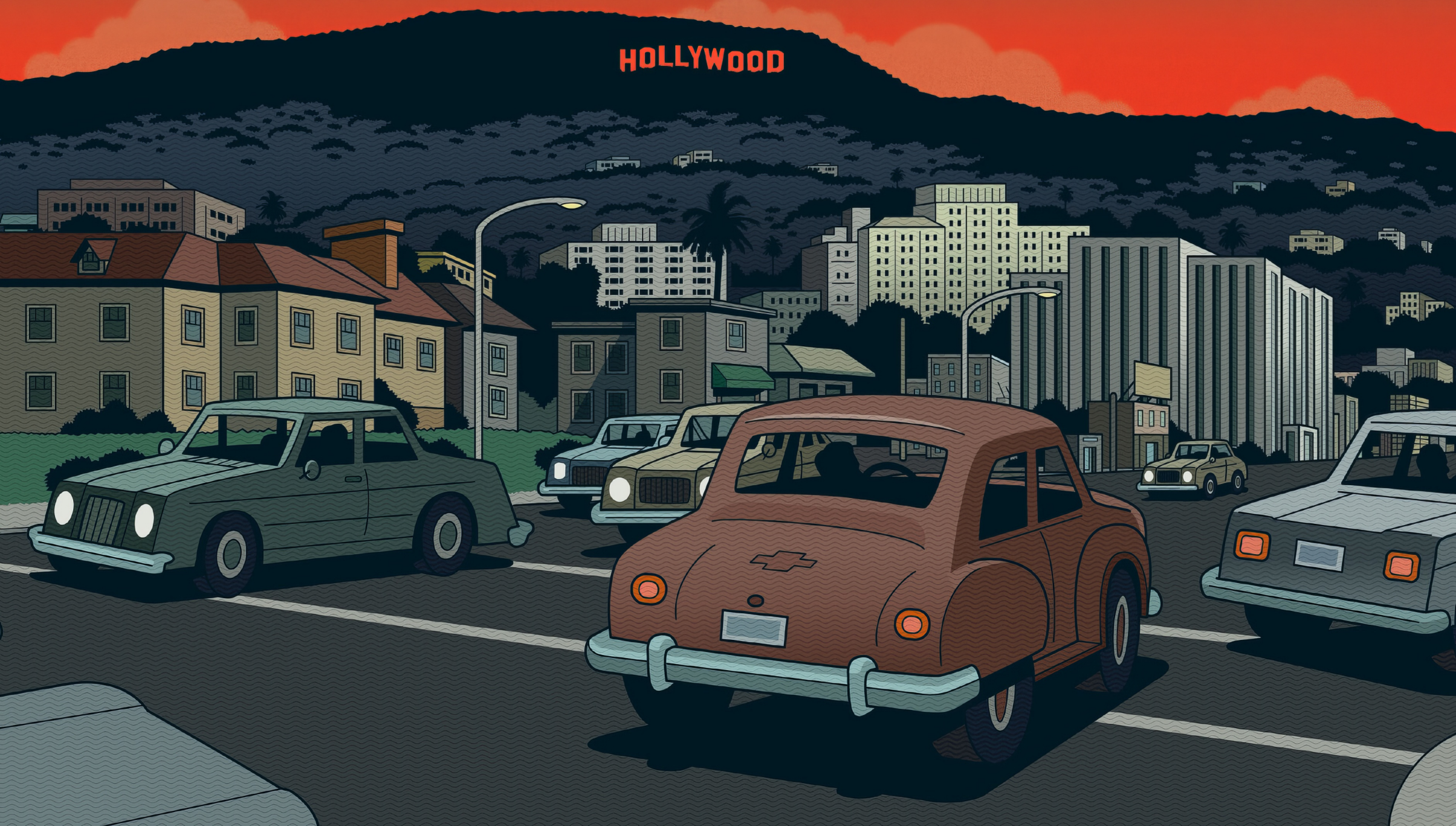
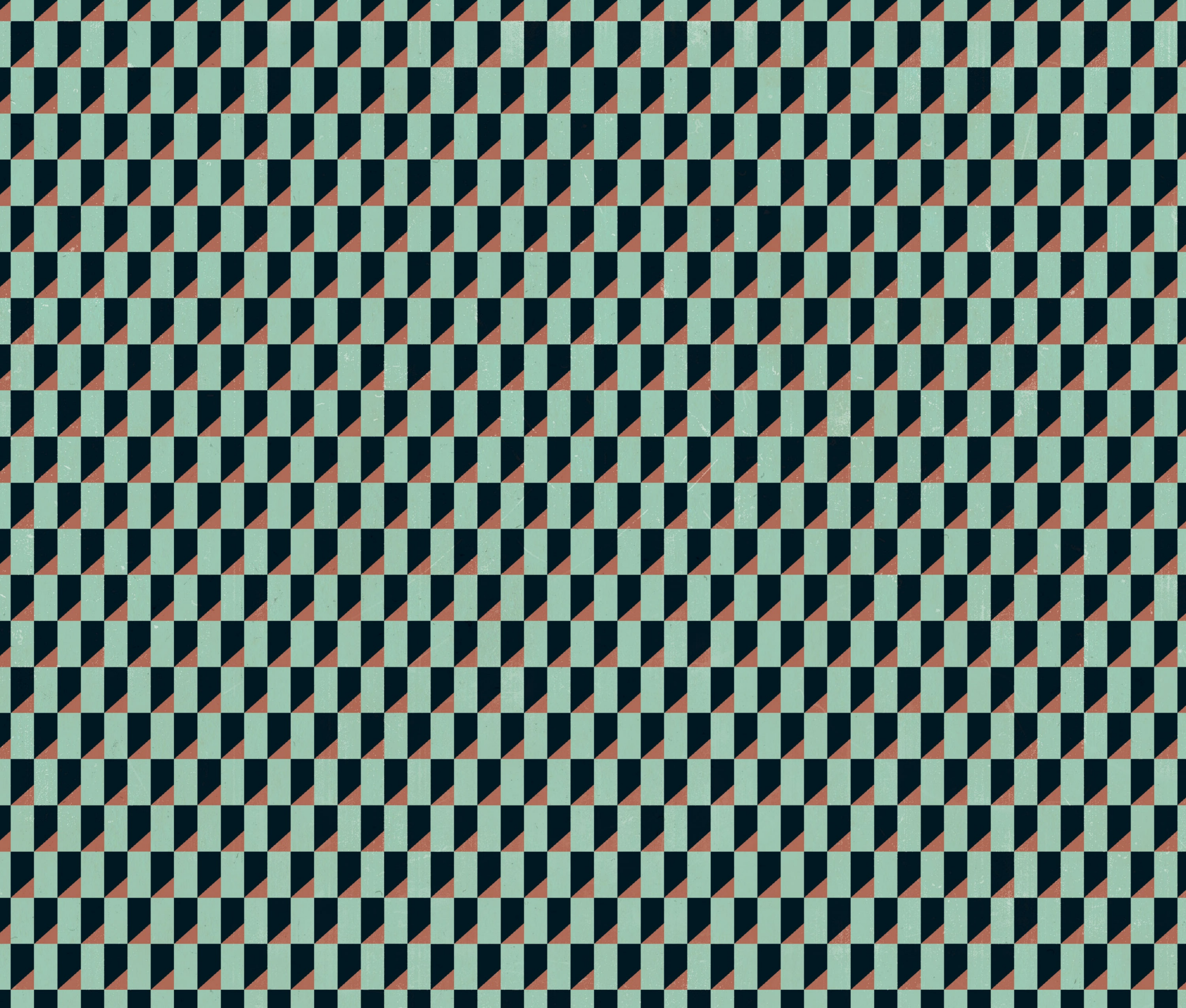


IN PERPETUITY

By Peter and Maria Hoey





IN PERPETUITY

by

Peter and Maria Hoey

We have only a little time to please the living.
But all eternity to love the dead.

–Sophocles, *Antigone*

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IN PERPETUITY

WAY DOWN DEEP

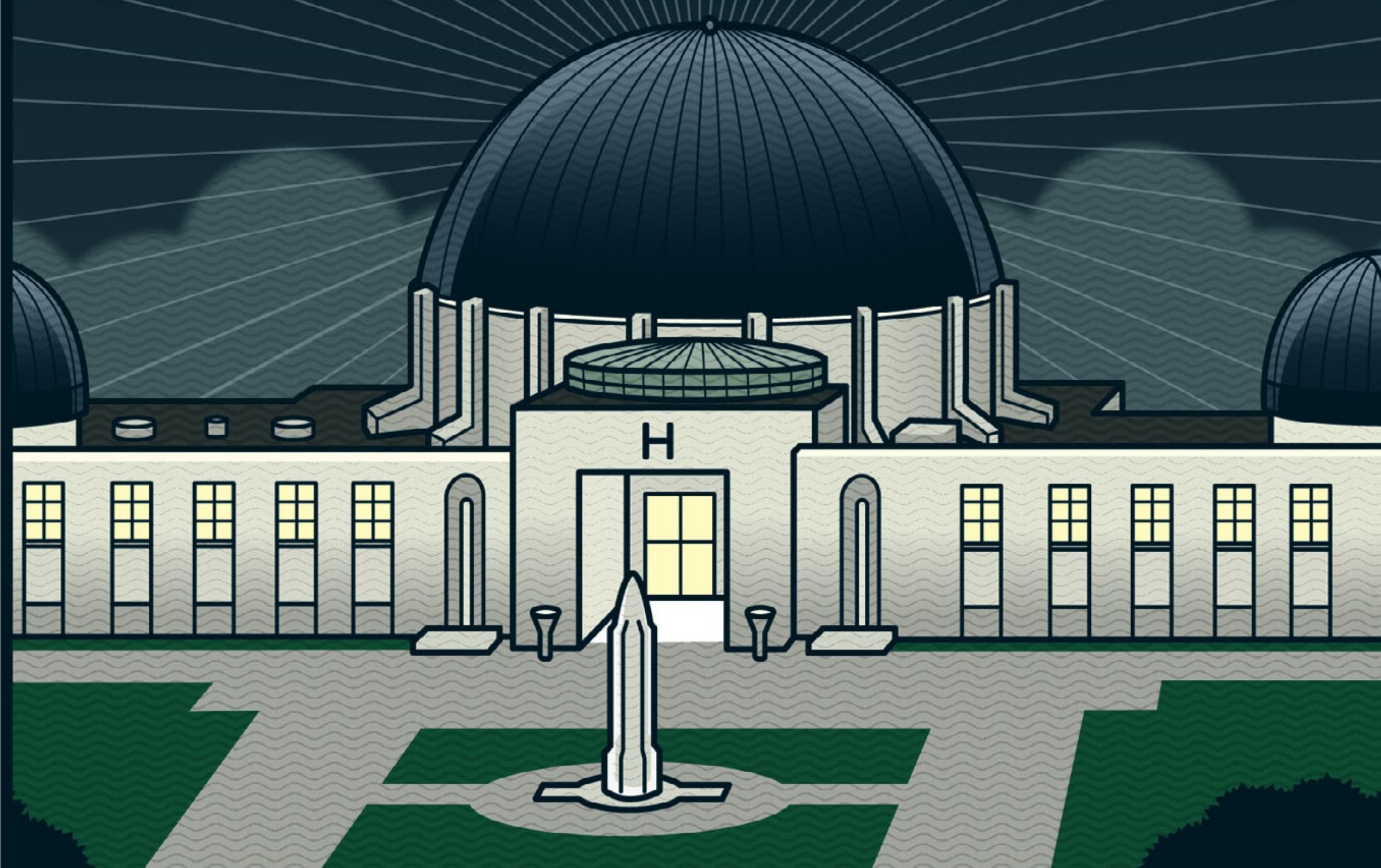
Chapters One through Ten

UNDER THE RIVER

Chapters Eleven through Eighteen

THE LONG BLACK VEIL

Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-Six



A stylized illustration of a city street at night. The scene features several modern buildings with geometric shapes and flat colors. A large, solid black circle is positioned in the upper left corner of the dark sky. The street is depicted with a dark blue surface and a white crosswalk line. A traffic light on a pole is visible on the left side of the street, showing a green light. Streetlights with white globes are also present. The overall style is graphic and minimalist, with a focus on shapes and color.

WAY DOWN DEEP

CHAPTER

1

GAS

HE GAVE IT A FILL.
TEN GALLONS
OF REGULAR AT
48 CENTS PER.

OUT OF A 20,
THAT WAS
\$15.20 BACK.

GAS

THE GAS STATION WAS RIGHT
OFF THE HARBOR FREEWAY.

AN UNUSED VENDING MACHINE
SAT IN THE OFFICE. THERE WAS
A MIRROR ON ITS FRONT PANEL.

PEANUTS

PEANUTS

WHEN HE LOOKED
AT ITS SURFACE
HE SAW ONLY THE
PUMPS BEHIND HIM.

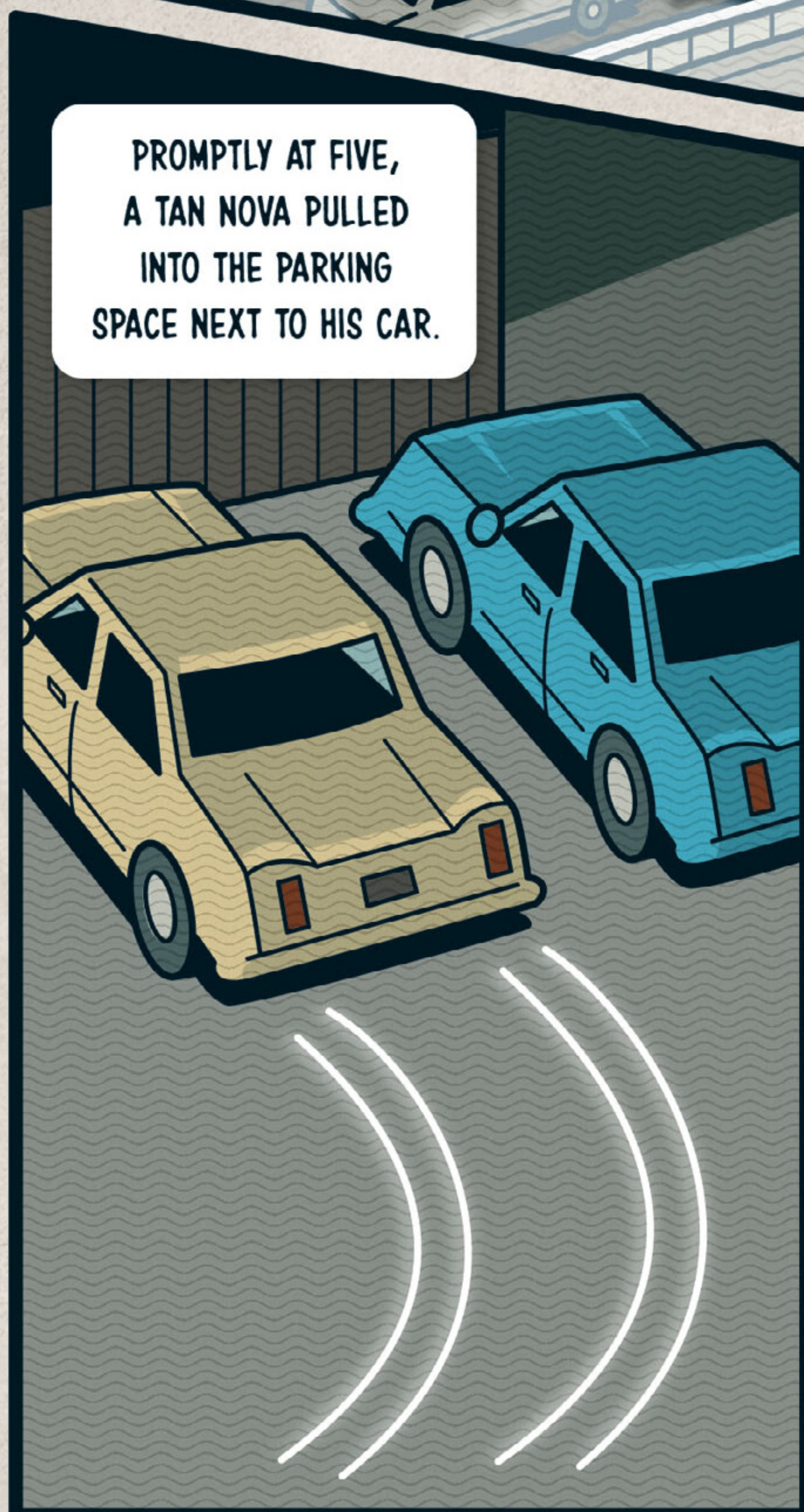
IN THE
AFTERLIFE,
THE DEAD
HAD NO
REFLECTION.

THE TRAFFIC ON THE FREEWAY
BARELY MOVED. THE EXHAUST
FROM THE IDLING CARS GAVE
THE AIR A BLuish HAZE. NEAR
THE HORIZON HUNG THE BLACK SUN,
AN UNBLINKING EYE IN THE SKY.



HIS MEETING WAS
AT 6 P.M. HE'D NEED
TO LEAVE SOON
IN ORDER TO STAY
ON SCHEDULE.

PROMPTLY AT FIVE,
A TAN NOVA PULLED
INTO THE PARKING
SPACE NEXT TO HIS CAR.



THE SECOND SHIFT GUY
WAS ALWAYS ON TIME.

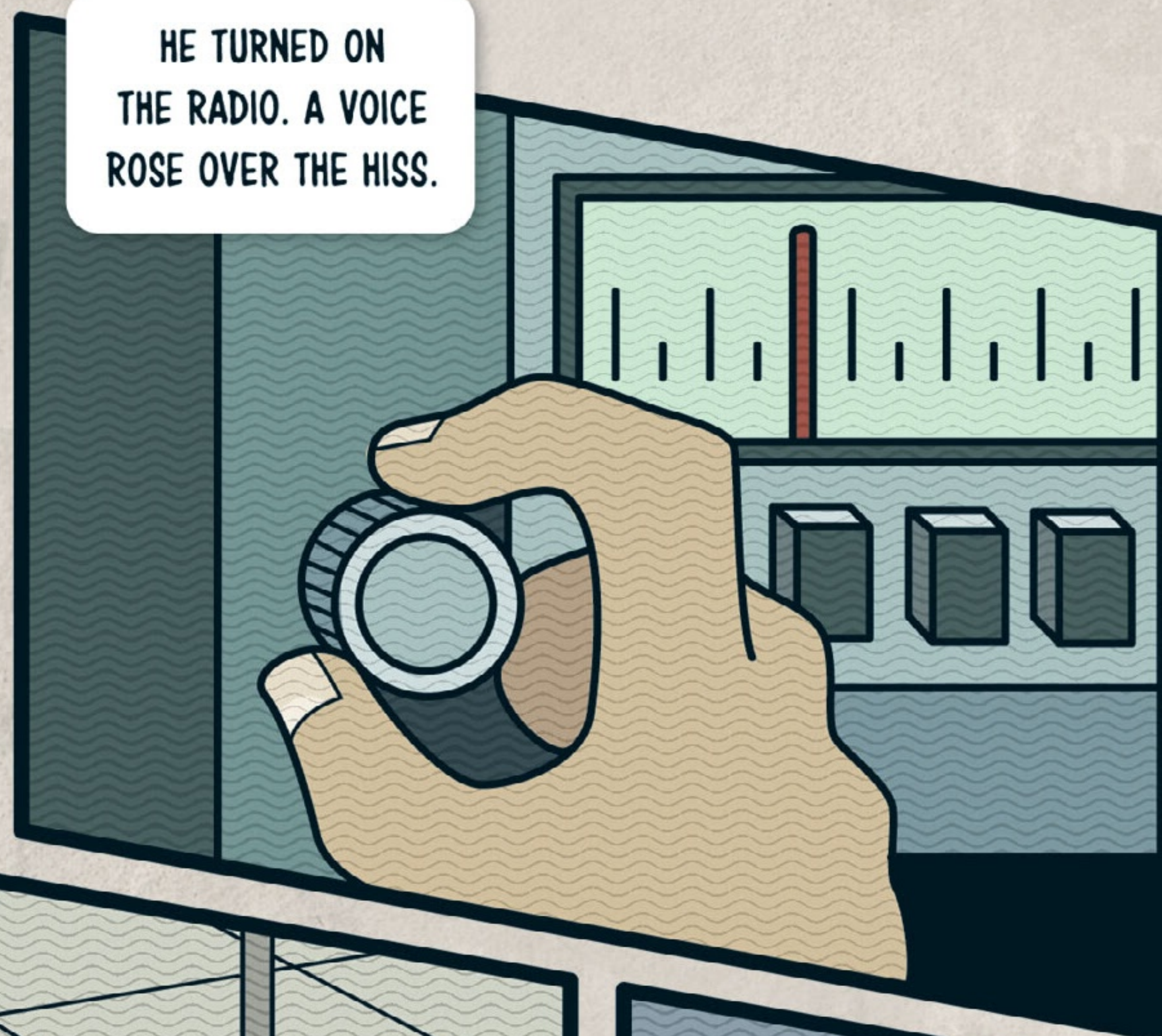


THE DRAWER COUNT
IS ON THE DESK.





HE DROVE NORTH AND
KEPT A STEADY PACE
PAST THE SLOWPOKES.



HE TURNED ON
THE RADIO. A VOICE
ROSE OVER THE HISS.



♪ "THE SMILE YOU ARE SMILING, YOU WERE SMILING THEN.
BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE OR WHEN." ♪



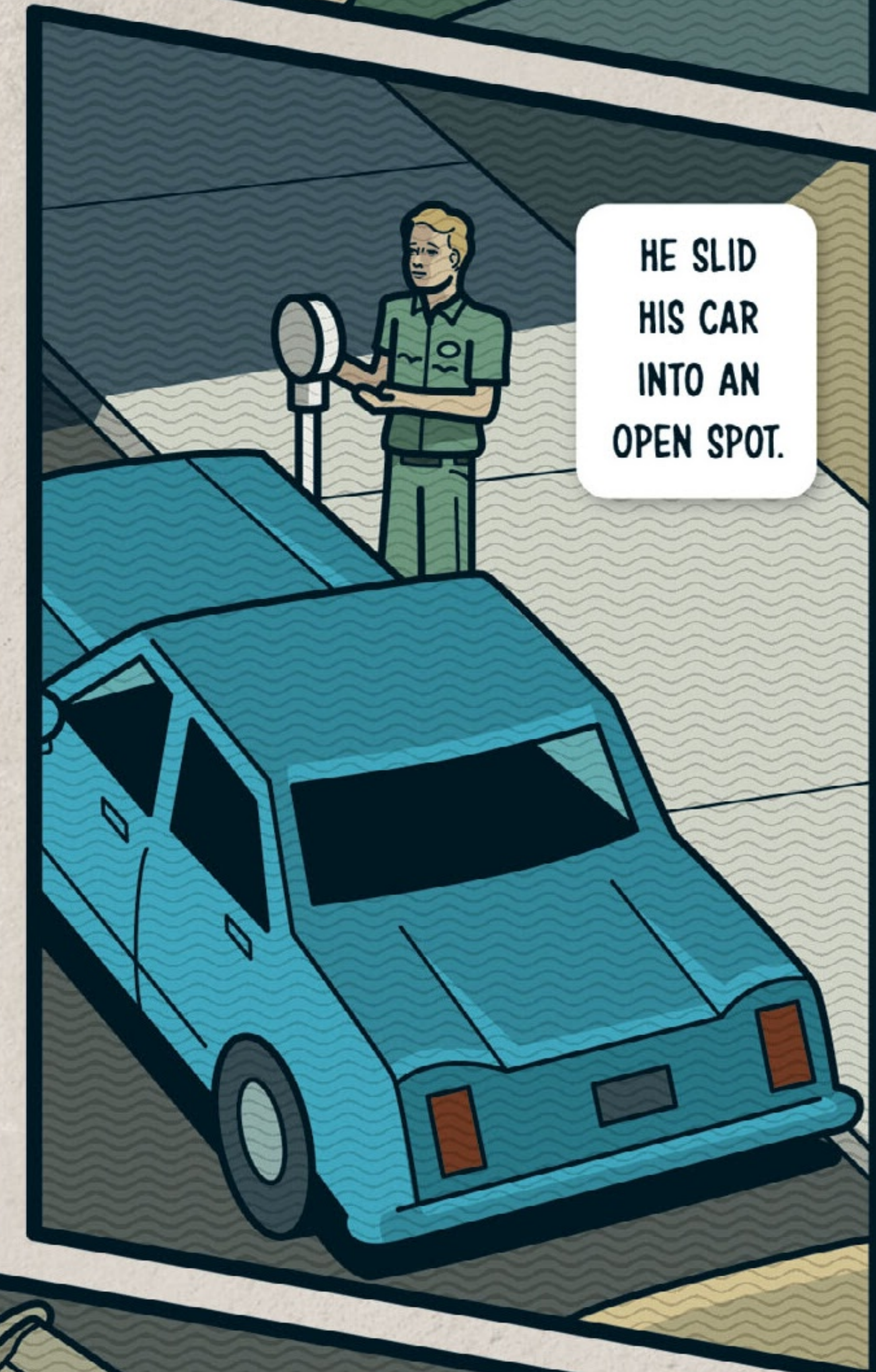
RODGERS
AND HART,
HE THOUGHT.



UP AHEAD,
A LIGHT
WAS OUT.



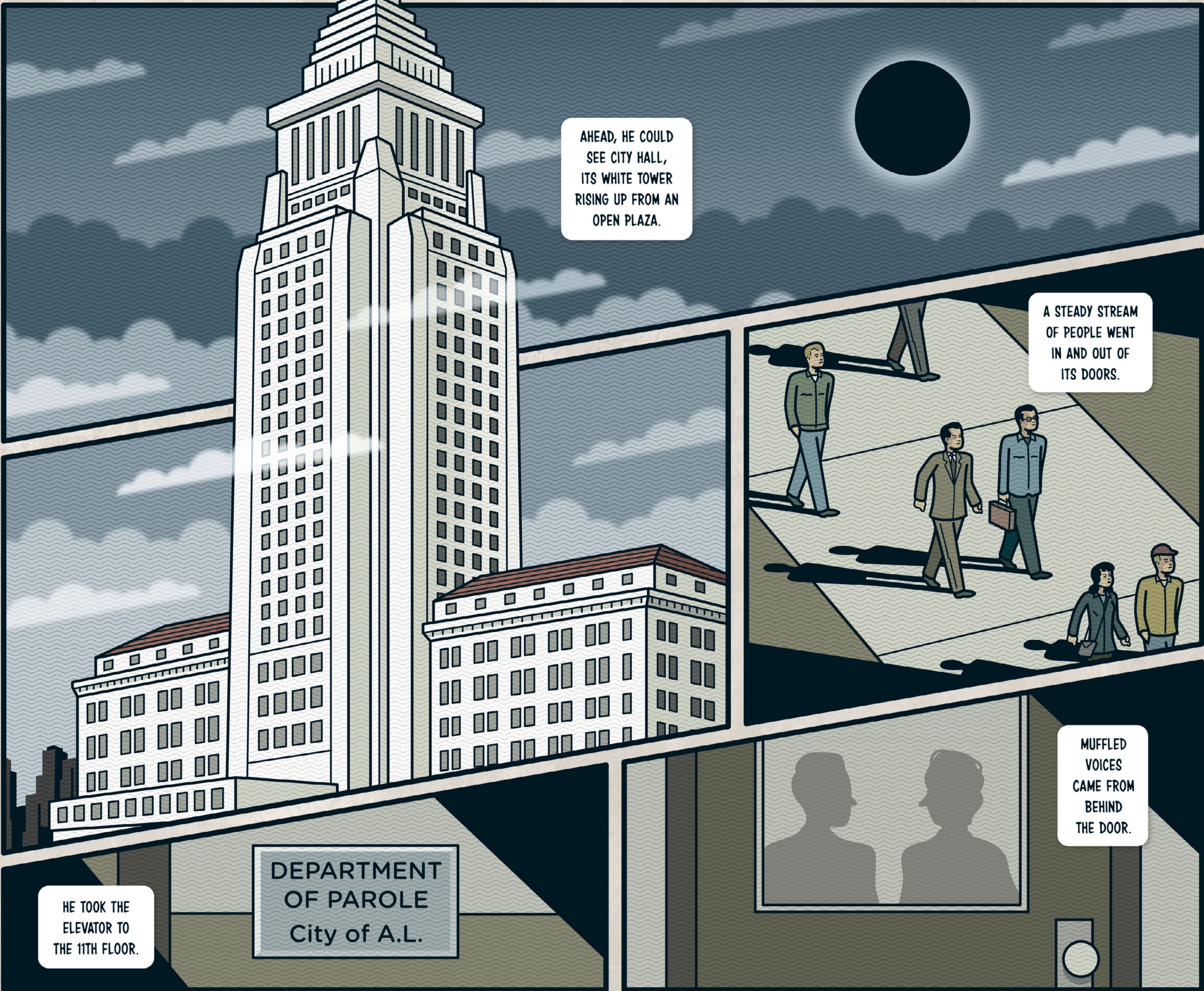
AN OFFICER
DIRECTED
TRAFFIC.



HE SLID
HIS CAR
INTO AN
OPEN SPOT.



HE'D WALK THE REST OF THE WAY.
IT WAS FASTER THAN DRIVING.



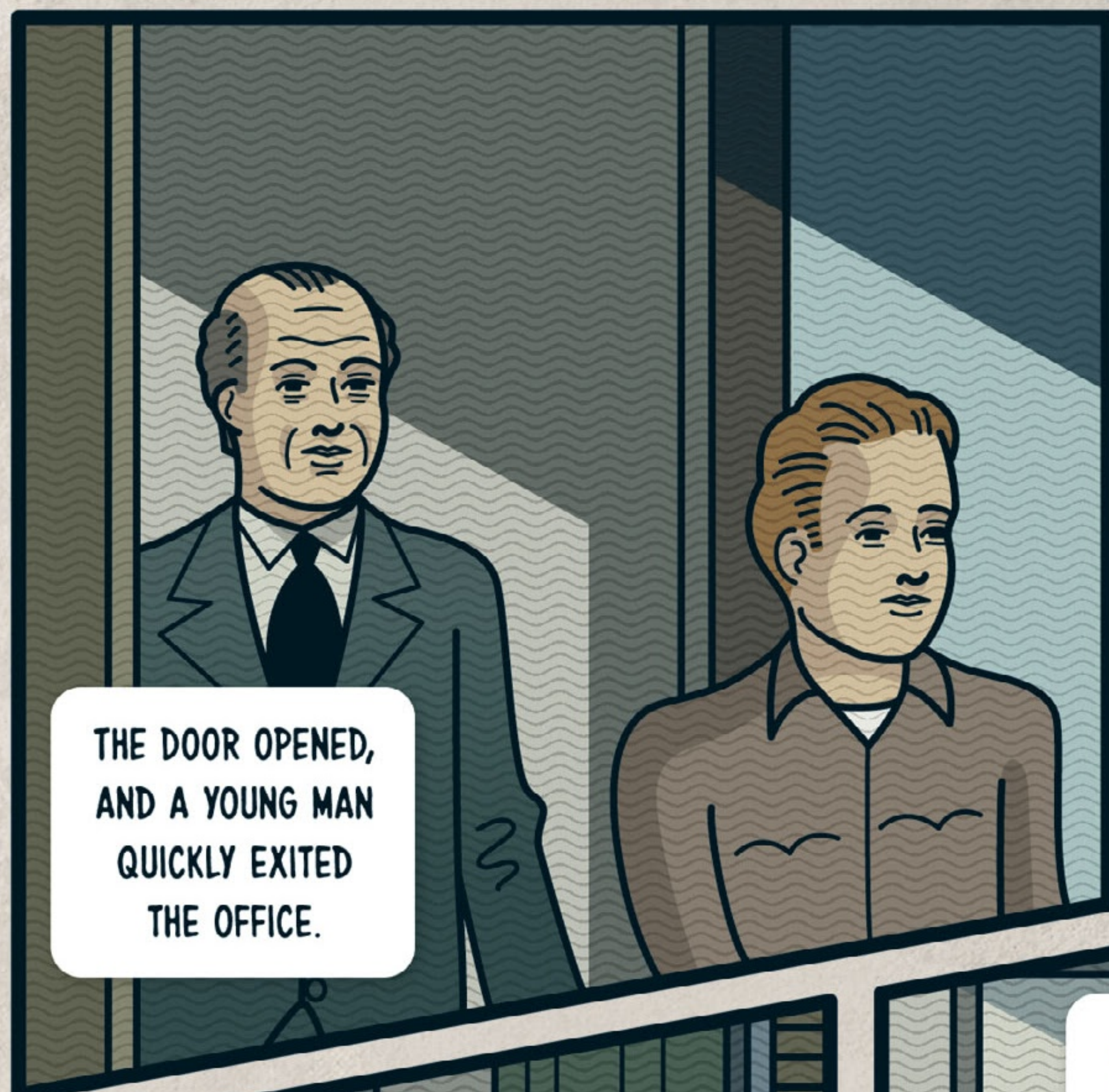
AHEAD, HE COULD
SEE CITY HALL,
ITS WHITE TOWER
RISING UP FROM AN
OPEN PLAZA.

A STEADY STREAM
OF PEOPLE WENT
IN AND OUT OF
ITS DOORS.

MUFFLED
VOICES
CAME FROM
BEHIND
THE DOOR.

HE TOOK THE
ELEVATOR TO
THE 11TH FLOOR.

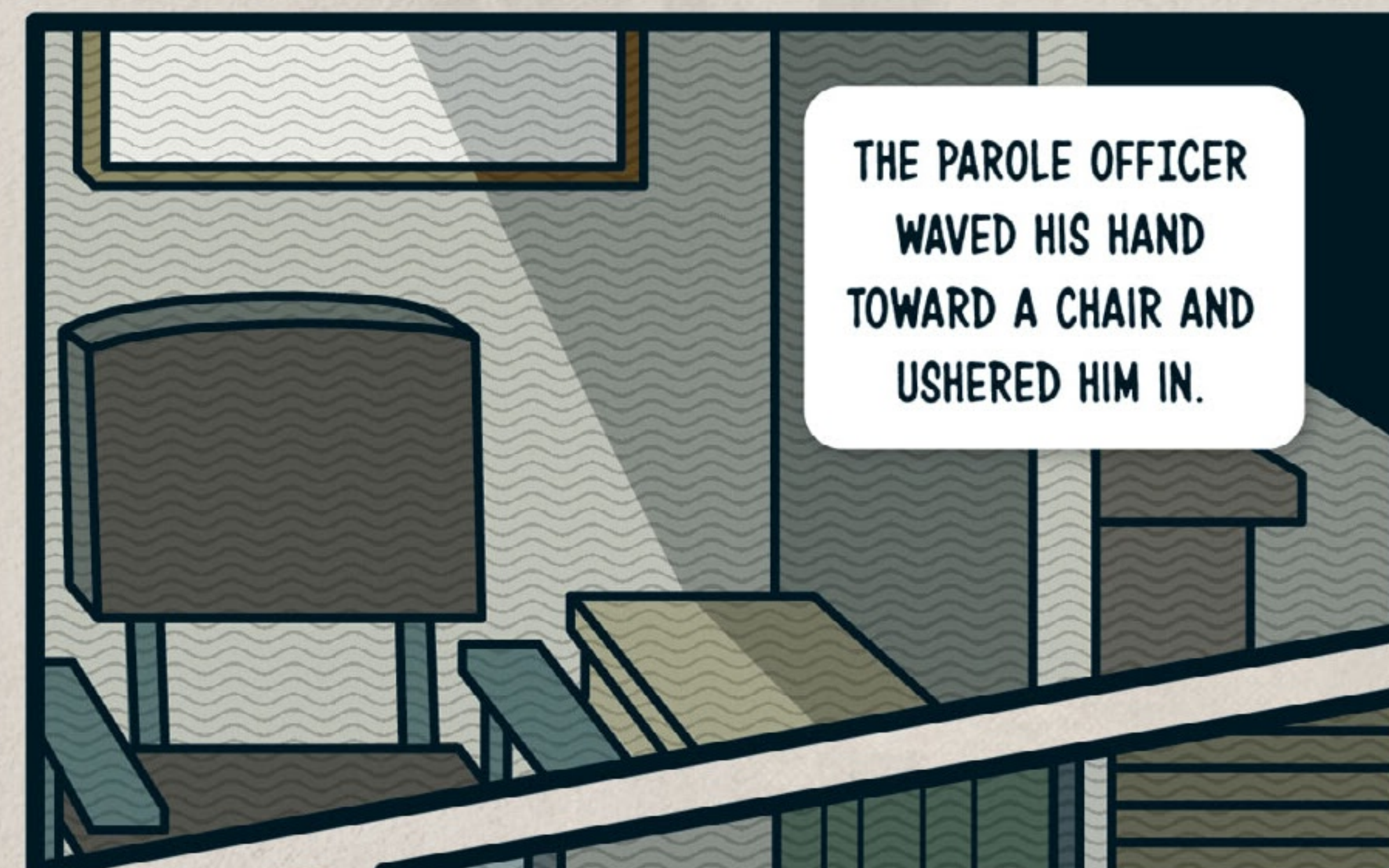
DEPARTMENT
OF PAROLE
City of A.L.



THE DOOR OPENED,
AND A YOUNG MAN
QUICKLY EXITED
THE OFFICE.



SIX O'CLOCK
APPOINTMENT?

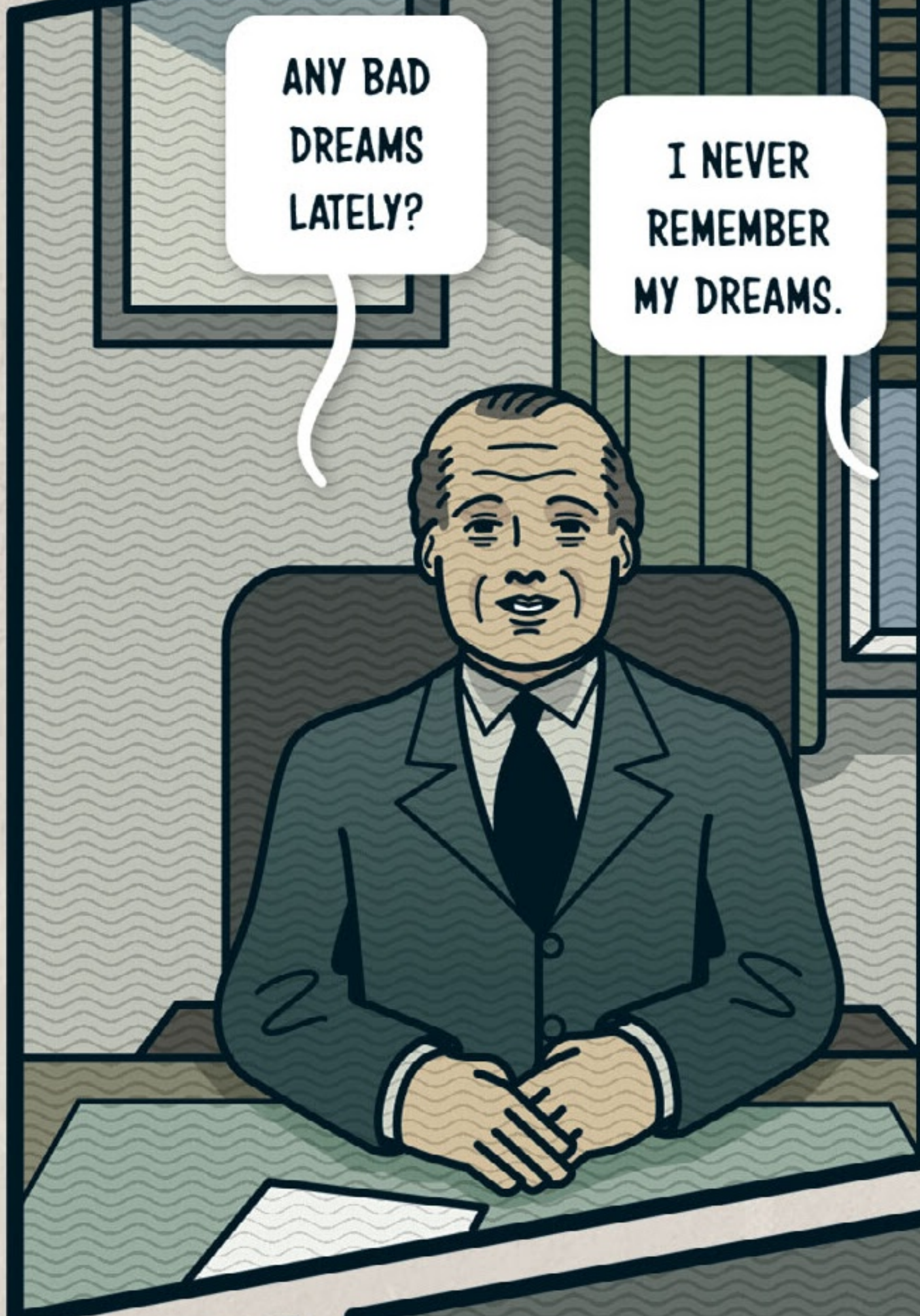


THE PAROLE OFFICER
WAVED HIS HAND
TOWARD A CHAIR AND
USHERED HIM IN.



OKAY, JAMES DEARBORN.
A.K.A. JIM DEARBORN.
D.O.D. 9.26.95.

HE SIGNED
AND QUICKLY
SCANNED
THE FILE.



ANY BAD
DREAMS
LATELY?

I NEVER
REMEMBER
MY DREAMS.



HOW ABOUT
VOICES? DO
YOU HEAR
ANY VOICES?

THE ONLY
VOICES I
HEAR ARE ON
THE RADIO.



YEAH. YEAH.
I GOT YOU.
THAT'S CLEVER.

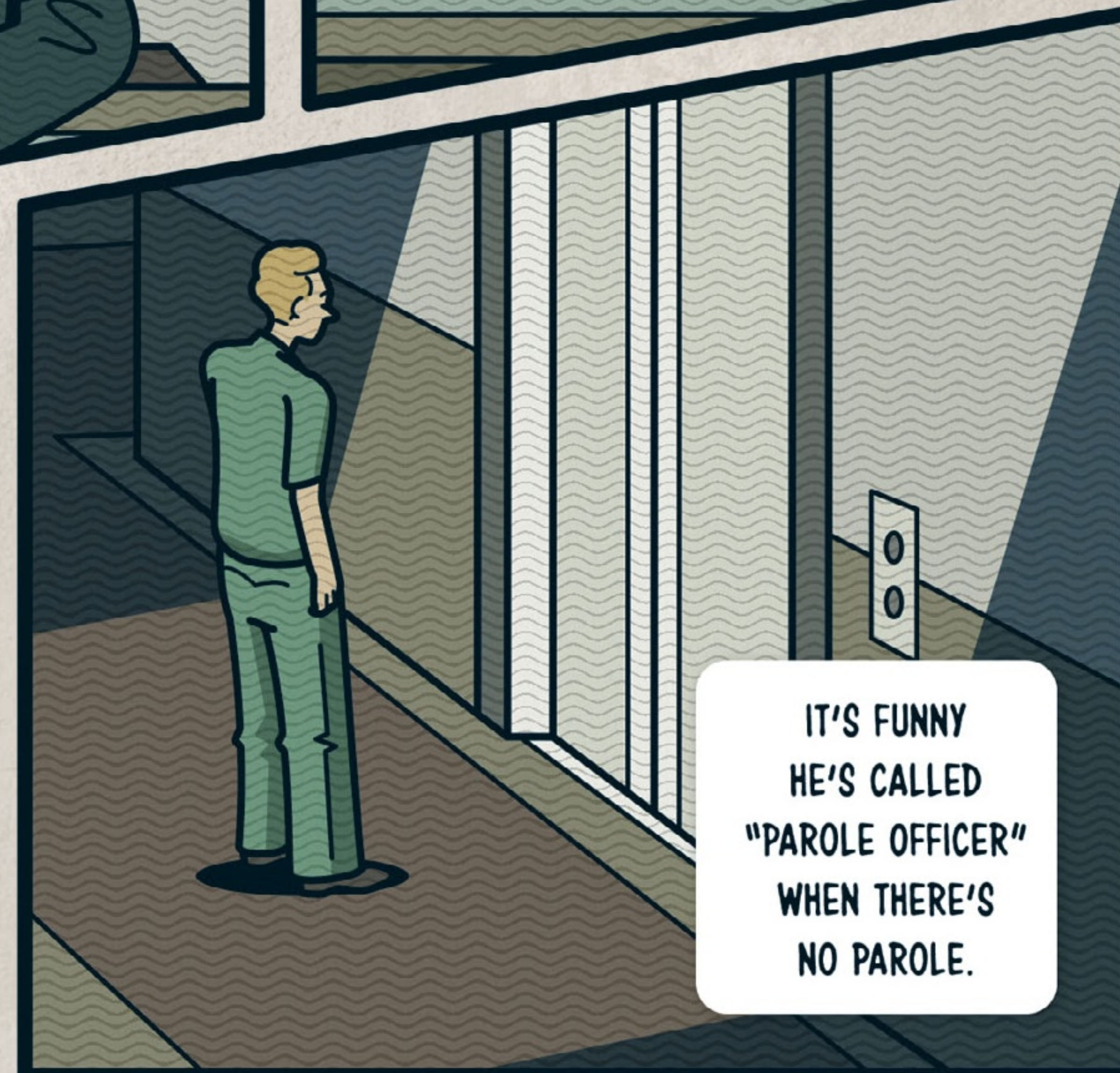


OKAY,
WE'RE GOOD.
YOUR NEXT
APPOINTMENT
IS IN 60 DAYS,
UNLESS...



UNLESS?

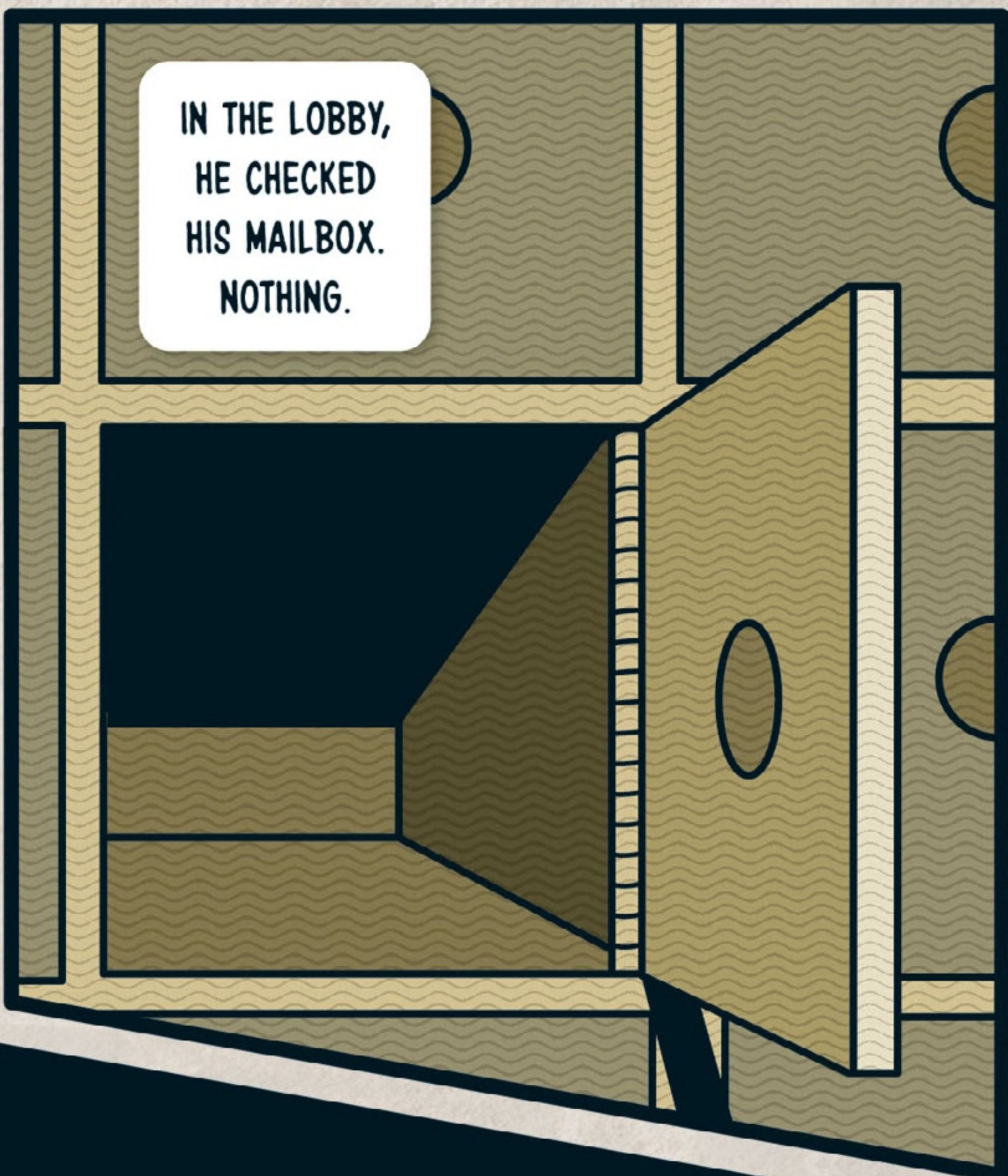
UNLESS YOU
BREAK ANY
OF THE TERMS
OF OUR DEAL.



IT'S FUNNY
HE'S CALLED
"PAROLE OFFICER"
WHEN THERE'S
NO PAROLE.



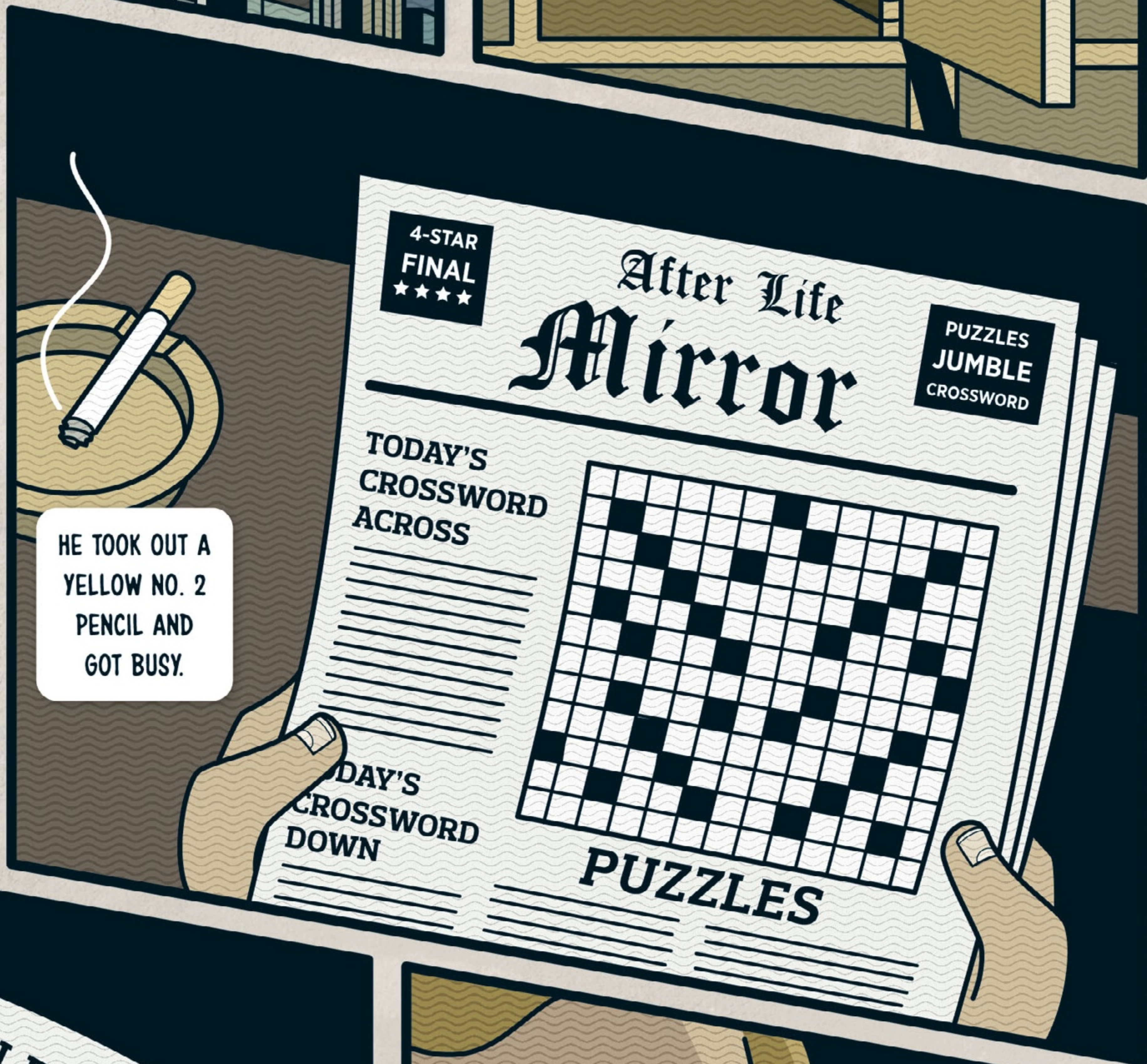
HE STOPPED AT THE NEWSTAND
ON HIS WAY BACK TO HIS APARTMENT
AND BOUGHT THE PAPER AND
A PACK OF CIGARETTES.



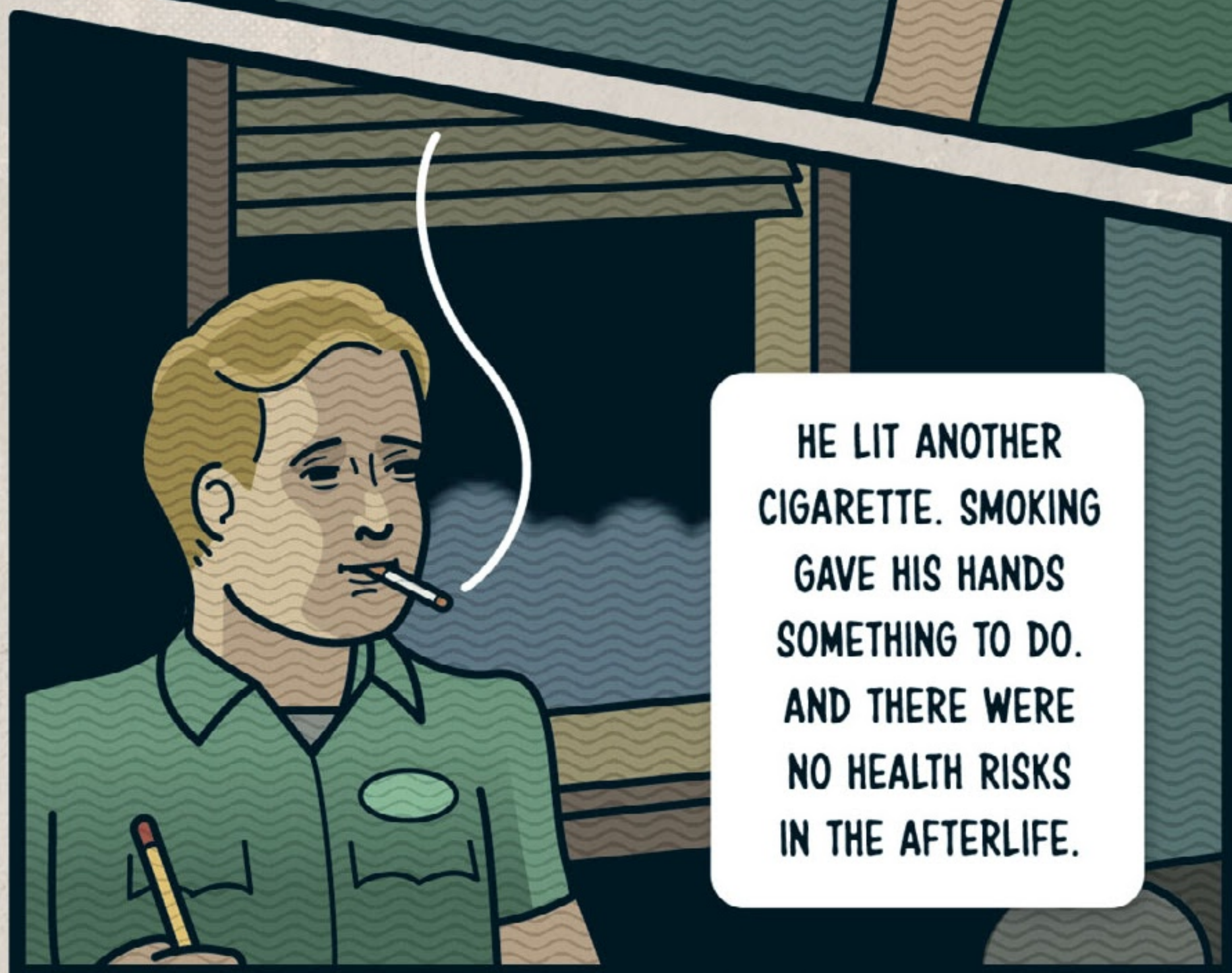
IN THE LOBBY,
HE CHECKED
HIS MAILBOX.
NOTHING.



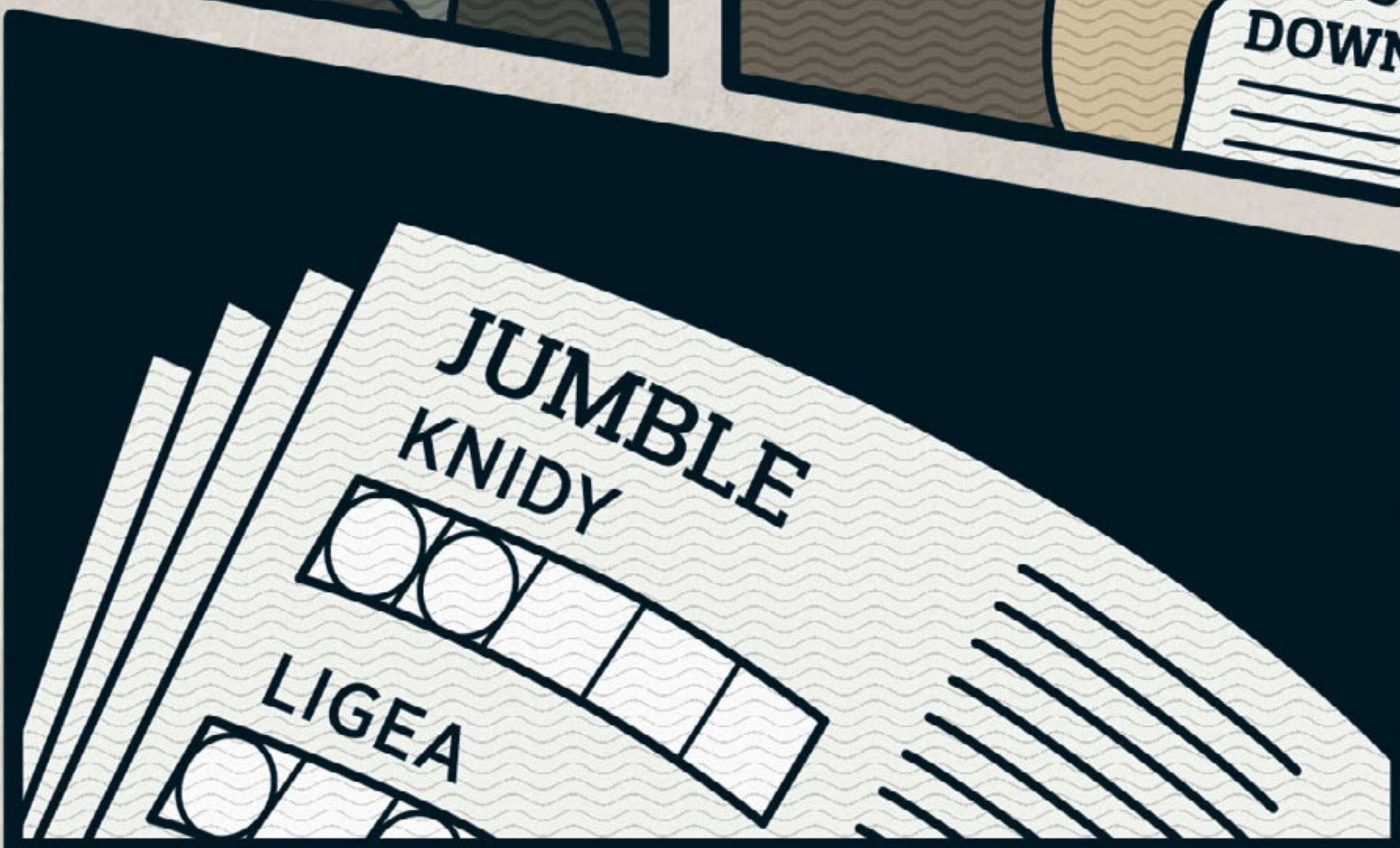
HIS VIEW LOOKED
OUT AT ECHO PARK.
THERE WERE NO
RESTAURANTS OR
LIQUOR STORES,
BUT THERE WERE
LOADS OF USED
BOOKSTORES.



HE TOOK OUT A
YELLOW NO. 2
PENCIL AND
GOT BUSY.



HE LIT ANOTHER
CIGARETTE. SMOKING
GAVE HIS HANDS
SOMETHING TO DO.
AND THERE WERE
NO HEALTH RISKS
IN THE AFTERLIFE.



BY 10:30 HE WAS
TIRED OF PUZZLES.



HE PUT ON
A JACKET
AND WALKED
DOWNSTAIRS.



HE HEADED TO A DECENT
USED BOOKSTORE.
ALL PAPERBACKS.



OPEN SEVEN DAYS,
11 A.M. TO 1 A.M.
BUT NOT TONIGHT.

BECAUSE OF TRAFFIC, THE DRIVE TO
SANTA MONICA COULD TAKE SIX HOURS.
HE DIDN'T LIKE THE BEACH MUCH ANYWAY.



IT WAS A FOUL-SMELLING,
DEAD OCEAN. THE EVER-PRESENT
FOG AND GRAY WATER
ALWAYS MADE THE BEACH
FEEL CLAUSTROPHOBIC.



HE WALKED ALONG A STRIP
OF SMALL STOREFRONTS.
ALL DARK, EXCEPT FOR A
SMALL NEON SIGN.



Echo



THE GUY AT
THE DOOR TOOK
NO NOTICE OF JIM.



ANYONE SPECIAL TONIGHT?

NAH, JUST WANDA.
THE COVER IS
TWO DOLLARS.



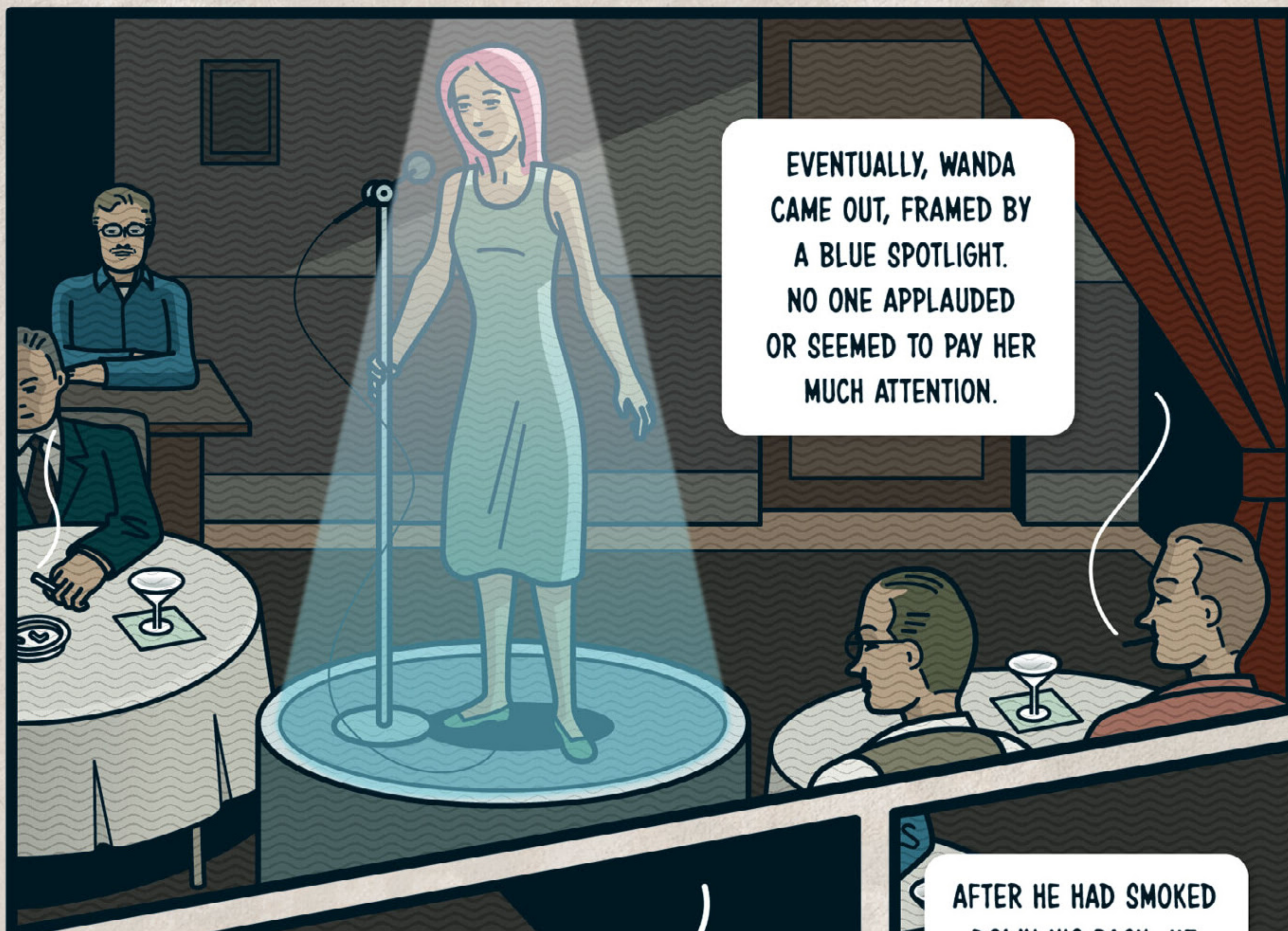
AS HE WENT IN,
HE NOTICED THE
ROOM WAS DARK
AND QUIET.



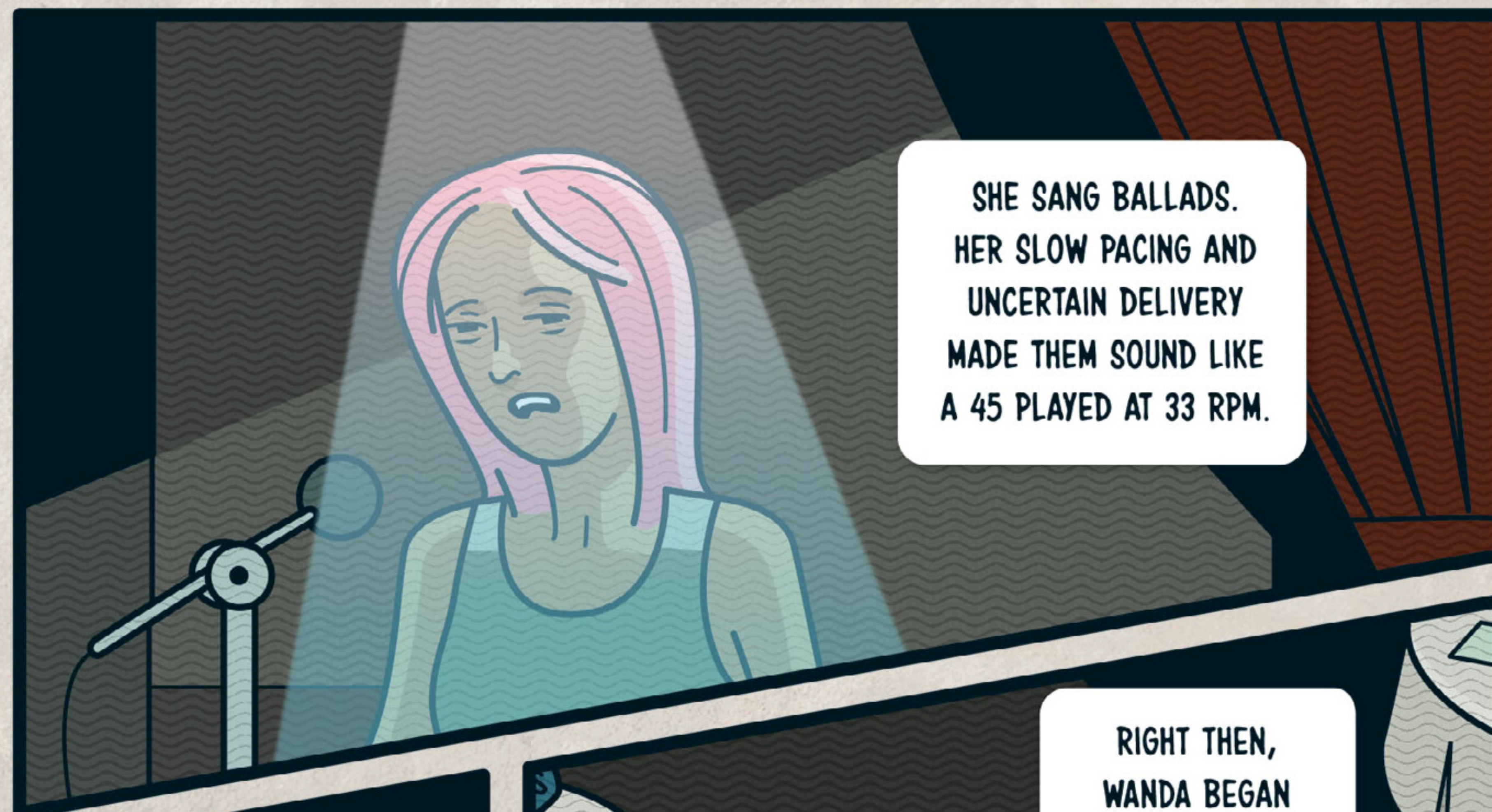
MARTINI PLEASE.



THE BARTENDER RETURNED
AND SET A GLASS
ON THE SMALL NAPKIN.
THE GLASS WAS EMPTY.
JIM LAID SOME MONEY
ON THE BAR.



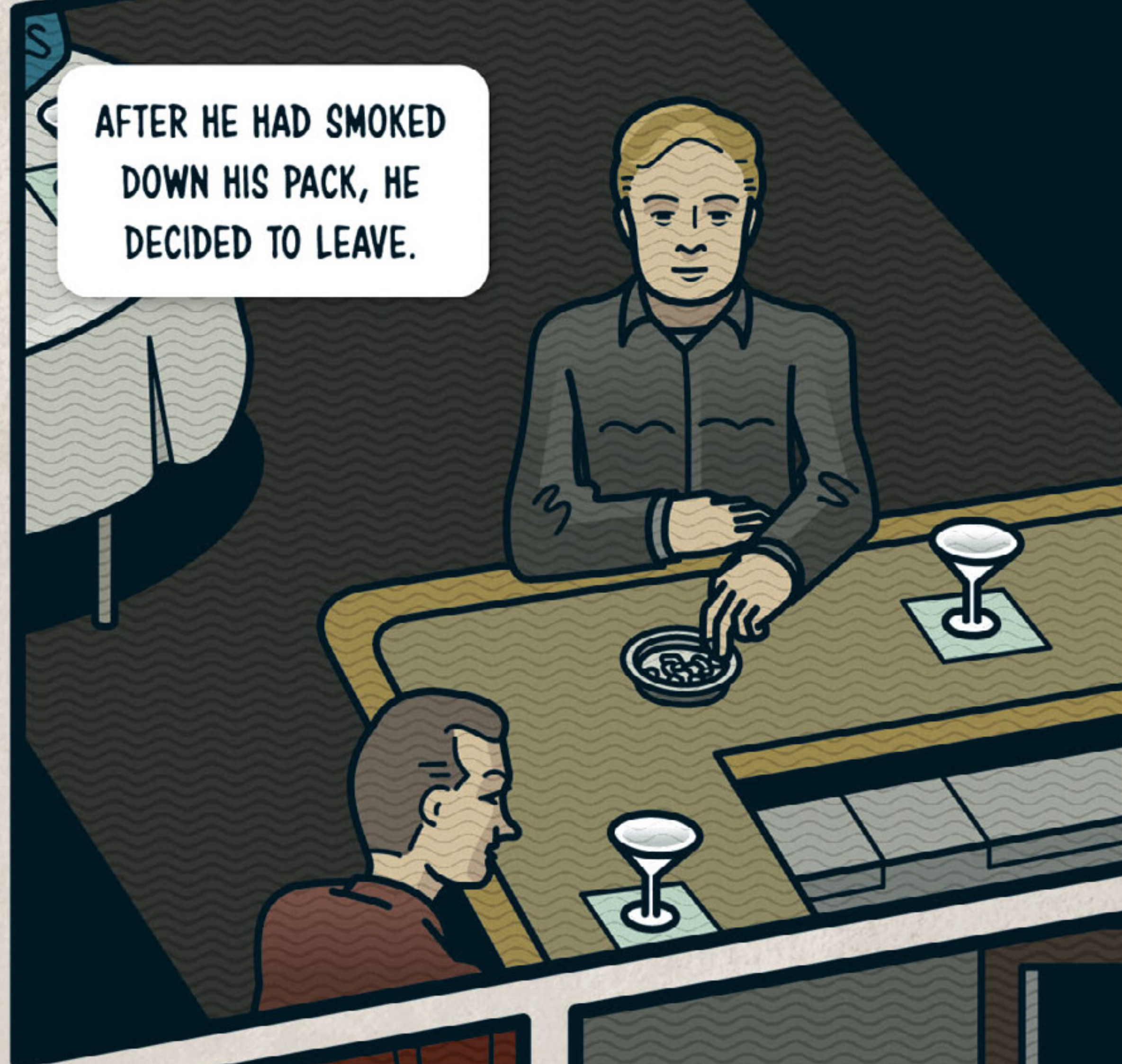
EVENTUALLY, WANDA CAME OUT, FRAMED BY A BLUE SPOTLIGHT. NO ONE APPLAUDED OR SEEMED TO PAY HER MUCH ATTENTION.



SHE SANG BALLADS. HER SLOW PACING AND UNCERTAIN DELIVERY MADE THEM SOUND LIKE A 45 PLAYED AT 33 RPM.



JIM SAT AT THE BAR, STARING INTO HIS EMPTY GLASS.



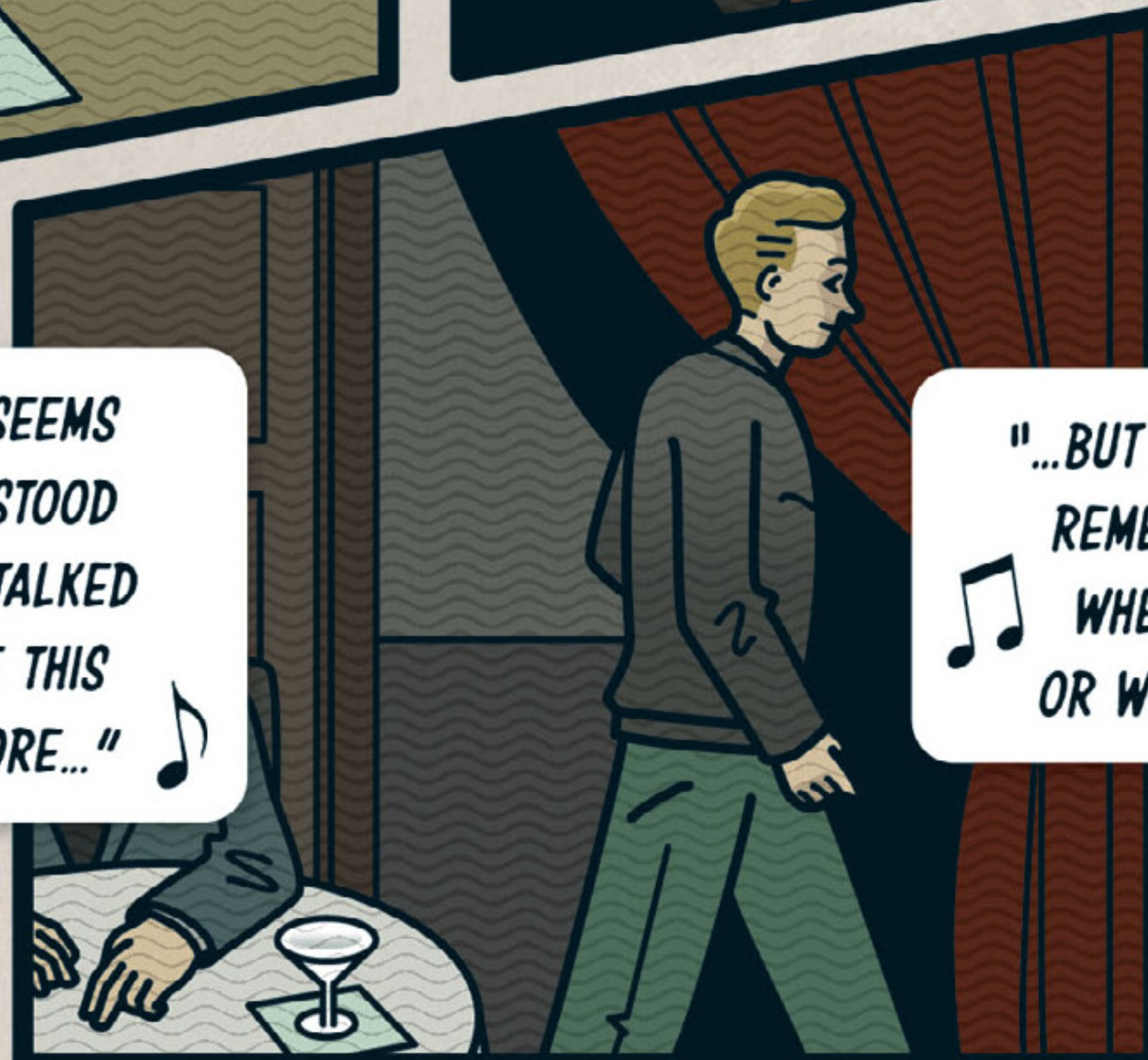
AFTER HE HAD SMOKED DOWN HIS PACK, HE DECIDED TO LEAVE.



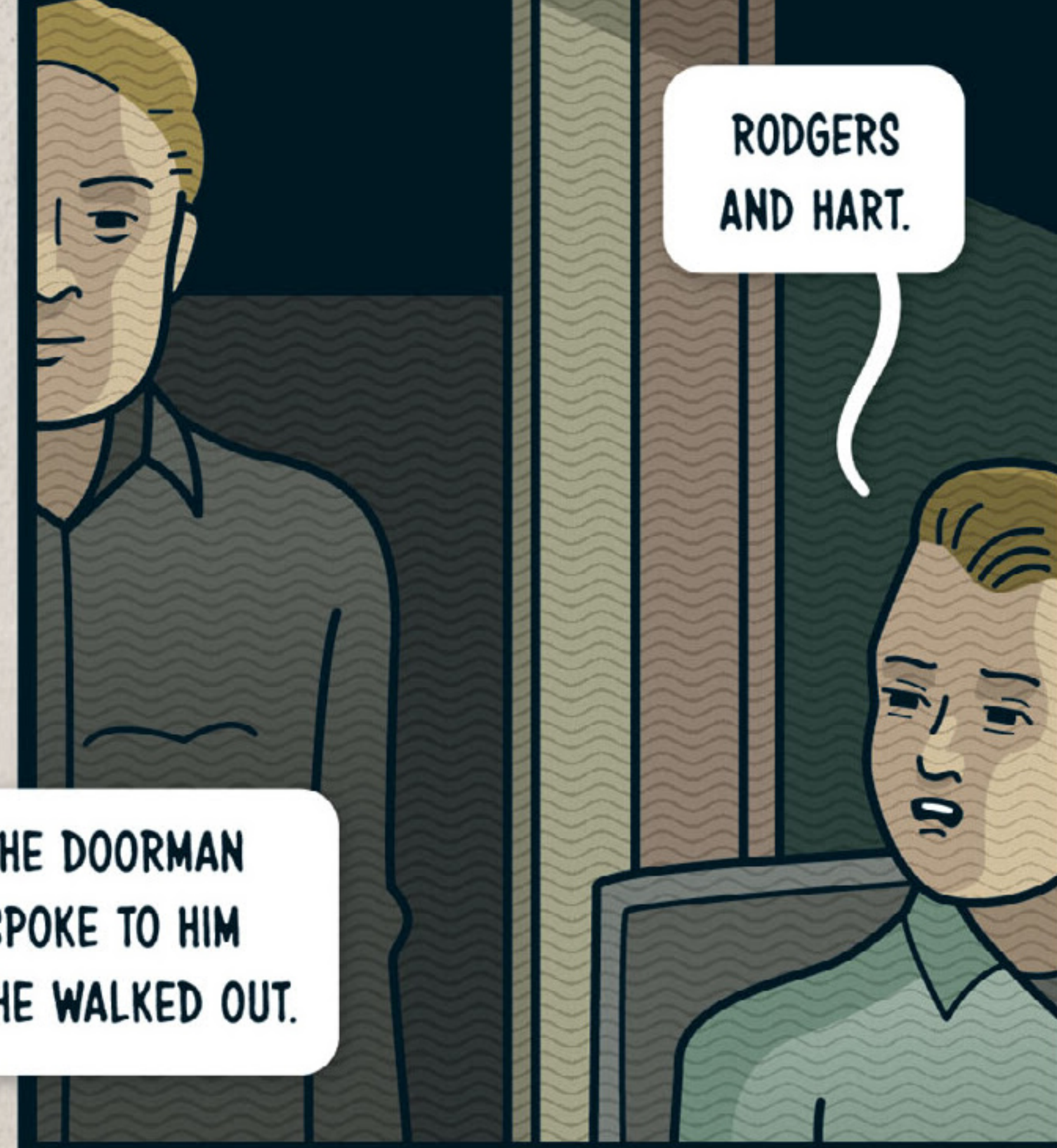
RIGHT THEN, WANDA BEGAN SINGING THE SONG HE'D HEARD ON THE RADIO.



"IT SEEMS WE STOOD AND TALKED LIKE THIS BEFORE..."

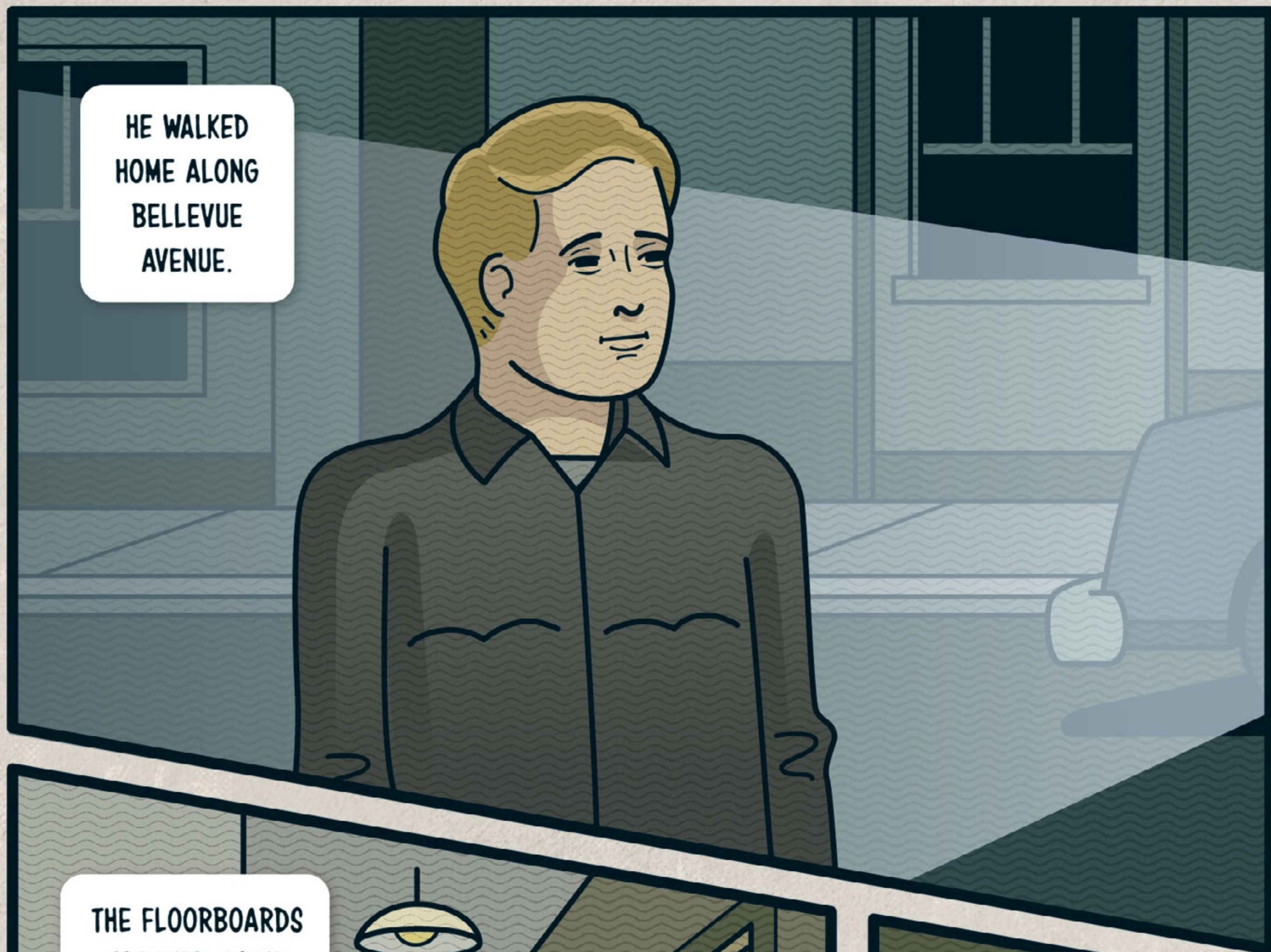


"...BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE... OR WHEN..."



RODGERS AND HART.

THE DOORMAN SPOKE TO HIM AS HE WALKED OUT.



HE WALKED
HOME ALONG
BELLEVUE
AVENUE.



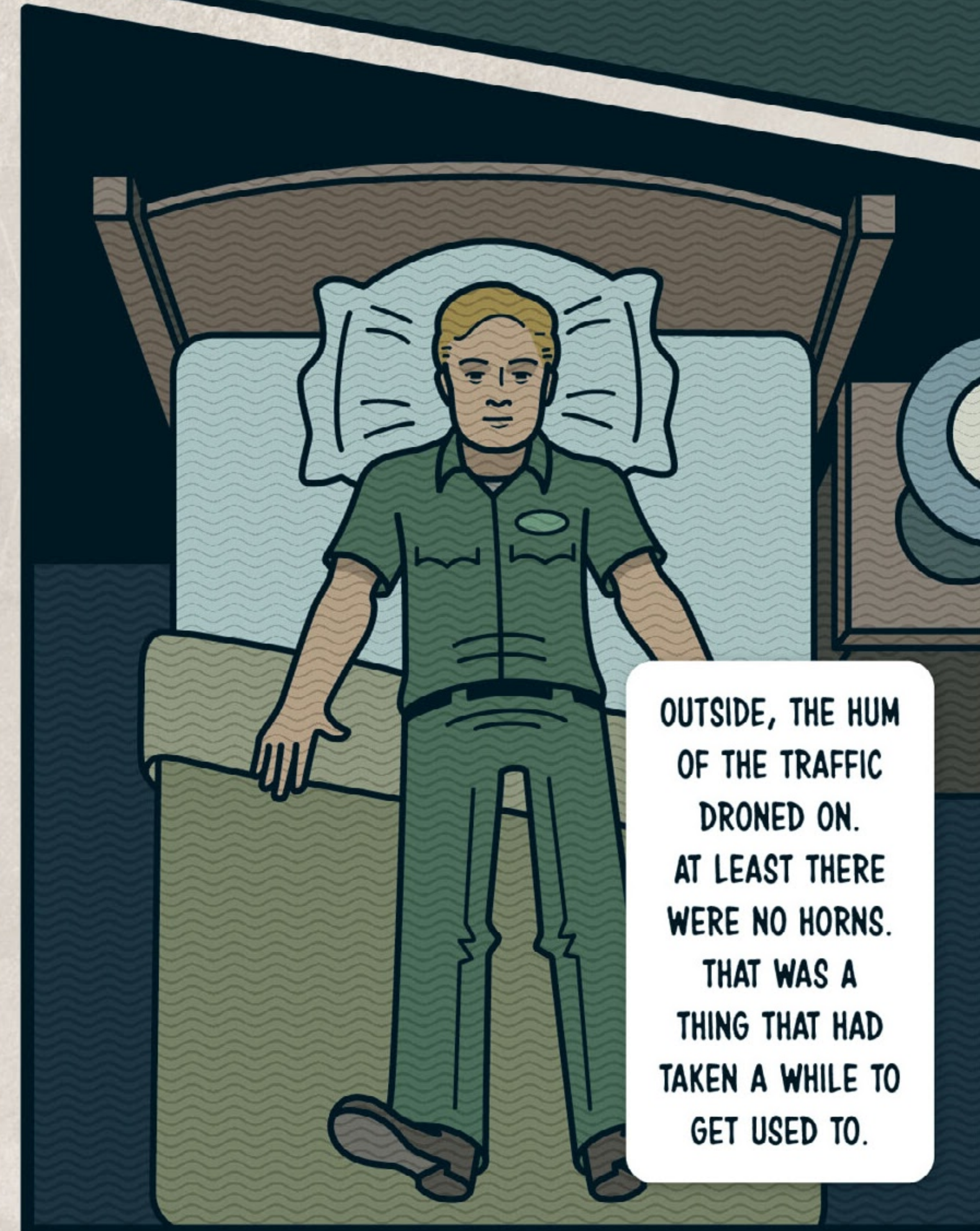
A CRUISER DROVE SLOWLY PAST HIM.
THE OFFICERS GAZED AT HIM WITH
IMPASSIVE EXPRESSIONS AND MOVED ON.



THE FLOORBOARDS
CREAKED AS HE
WALKED UP THE
THREE FLIGHTS
TO HIS PLACE.



HE DIDN'T
BOTHER
TURNING ON
THE LIGHTS.



OUTSIDE, THE HUM
OF THE TRAFFIC
DRONED ON.
AT LEAST THERE
WERE NO HORNS.
THAT WAS A
THING THAT HAD
TAKEN A WHILE TO
GET USED TO.

CHAPTER

2

THE ROUTINE AT THE STATION
WAS ALWAYS FULL SERVICE.

IT WAS ONLY
LEADED GAS.

YOU POPPED
THE HOOD
AND CHECKED
THE OIL
AND WATER.

AFTER THAT,
YOU CLEANED
THE WINDOWS.

THE WHOLE AFFAIR
TOOK BETWEEN TWO
AND FIVE MINUTES.

THERE WAS ALSO
THE JOB OF SELLING
CIGARETTES
AND EMPTYING
ASHTRAYS.



A RED SEDAN
DRIFTED IN
OFF THE STREET.



HE CHECKED UNDER
THE HOOD WHILE
THE PUMP RAN.



HOW MUCH, SIR?



TOPPED OFF AT
EIGHT DOLLARS, SIR.
YOUR OIL AND WATER
LOOK FINE.



I DIDN'T ASK YOU
TO TOP IT OFF, JERK...



...I SAID FILL.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND
THE DIFFERENCE?



THE MAN
SLOWLY
LOOKED UP...



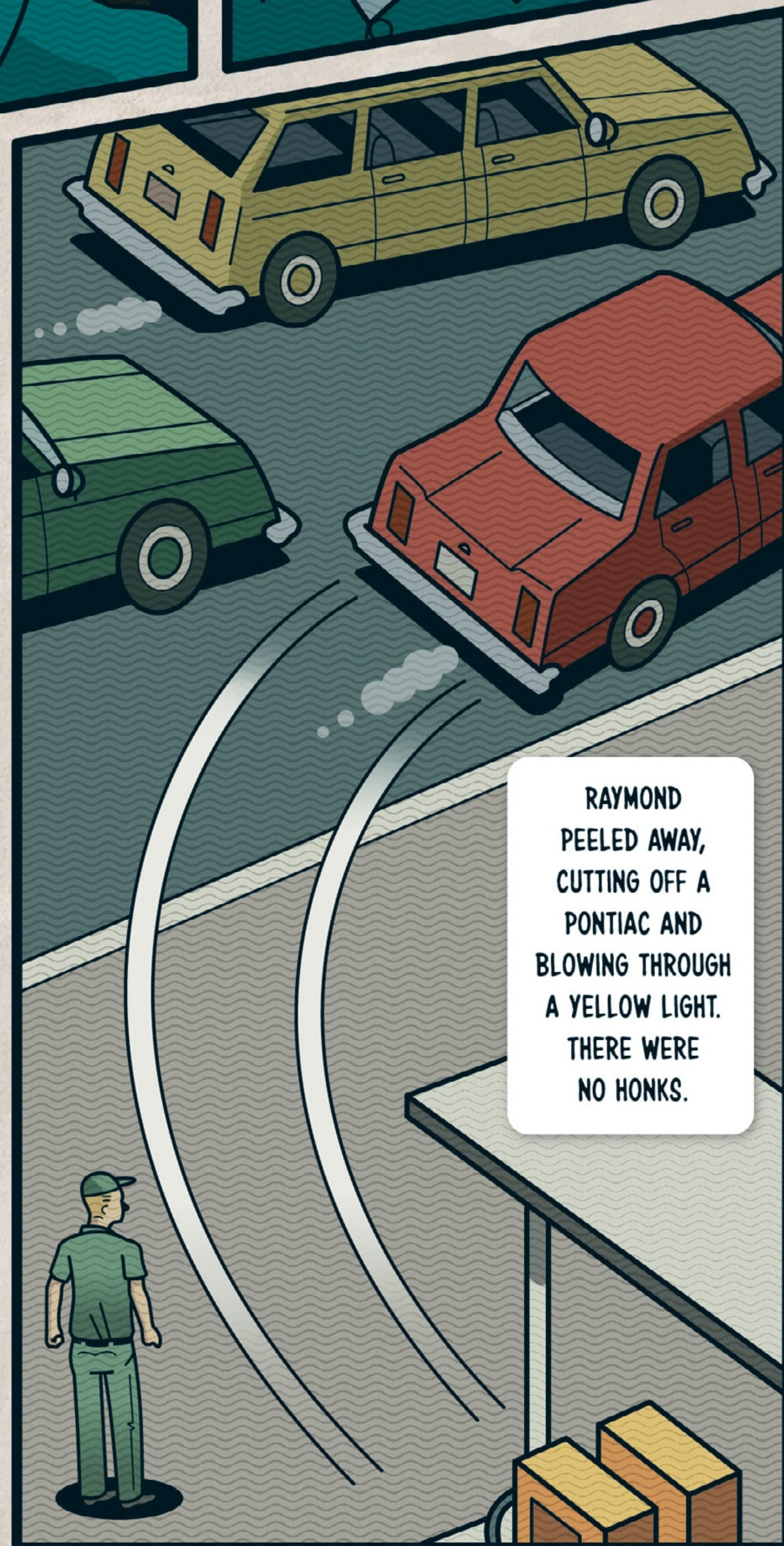
WELL, WELL, WELL.
LOOK WHO IT IS.
BEEN A LONG TIME,
JIMBO.

HELLO, RAYMOND.
IT'S STILL
EIGHT DOLLARS.



KEEP THE
CHANGE, JIMMY.

THE BILLS WERE
WORN AND FADED.



RAYMOND
PEELED AWAY,
CUTTING OFF A
PONTIAC AND
BLOWING THROUGH
A YELLOW LIGHT.
THERE WERE
NO HONKS.

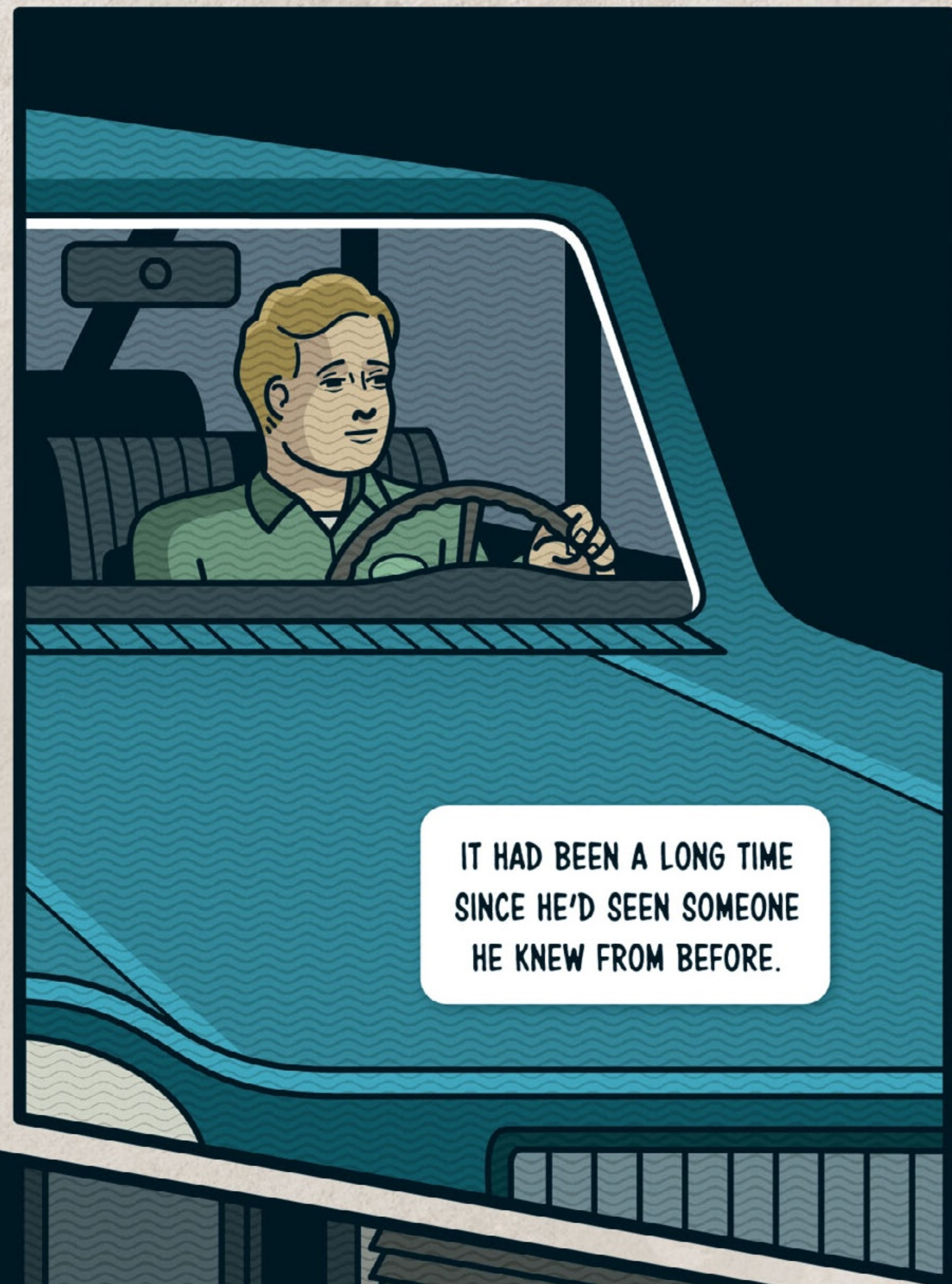


THE DRIVE HOME
TOOK LONGER
THAN USUAL.

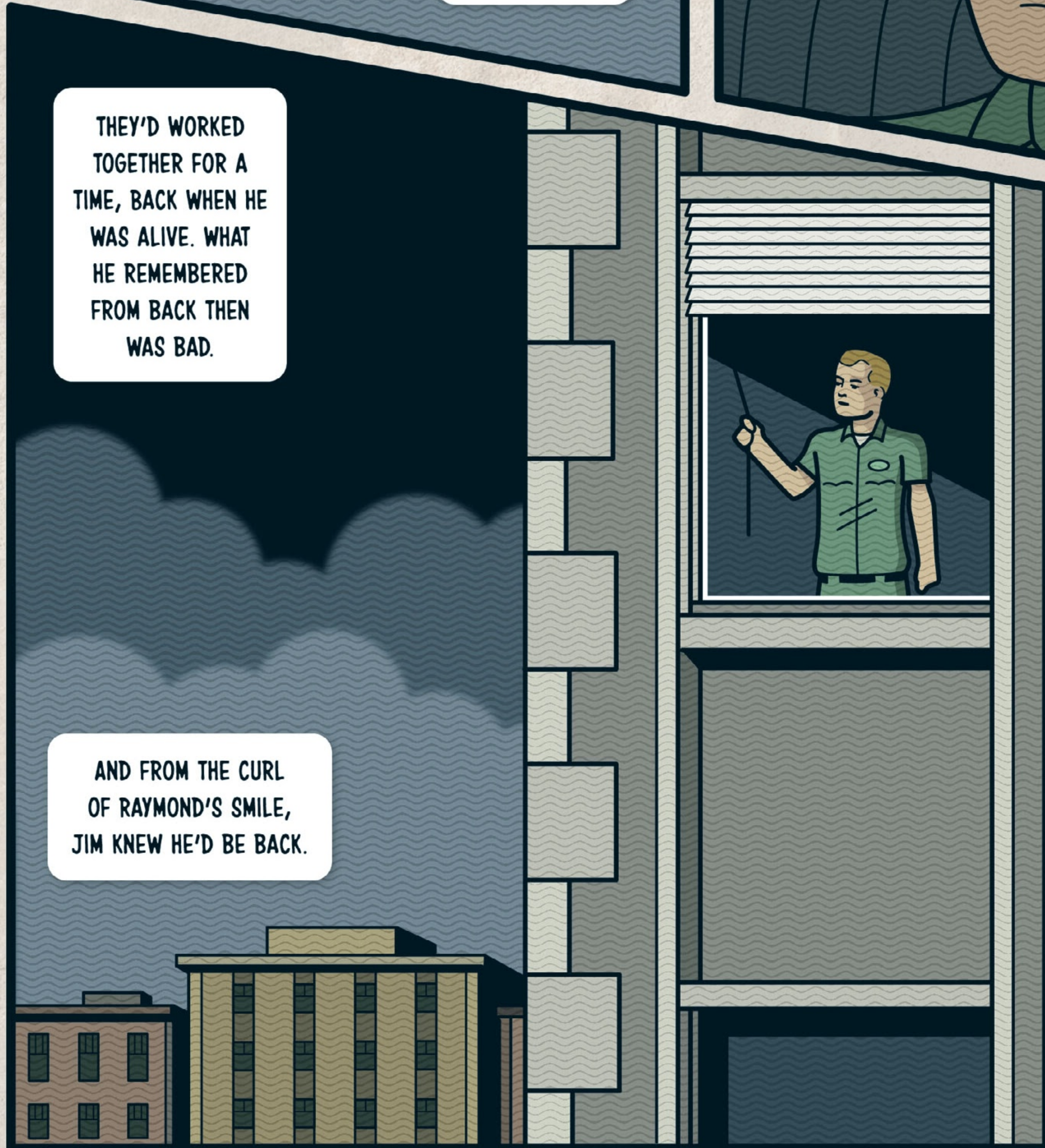


HE DIDN'T BOTHER
WITH THE RADIO.
HE HAD SOMETHING
ON HIS MIND...

...RAYMOND.



IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME
SINCE HE'D SEEN SOMEONE
HE KNEW FROM BEFORE.



THEY'D WORKED
TOGETHER FOR A
TIME, BACK WHEN HE
WAS ALIVE. WHAT
HE REMEMBERED
FROM BACK THEN
WAS BAD.

AND FROM THE CURL
OF RAYMOND'S SMILE,
JIM KNEW HE'D BE BACK.



BY 10 P.M. HE WAS
ANXIOUS AND OUT
OF SMOKES. THERE
WAS AN ALL-NIGHT
CINEMA ON FRANKLIN.
MAYBE THAT WOULD
CALM HIM DOWN.



A POLICE CAR SLOWLY
FOLLOWED ALONGSIDE HIM.



THE STREETLAMPS
MADE A BUZZING NOISE
IN THE DRIZZLE.



10-4 ROGER.

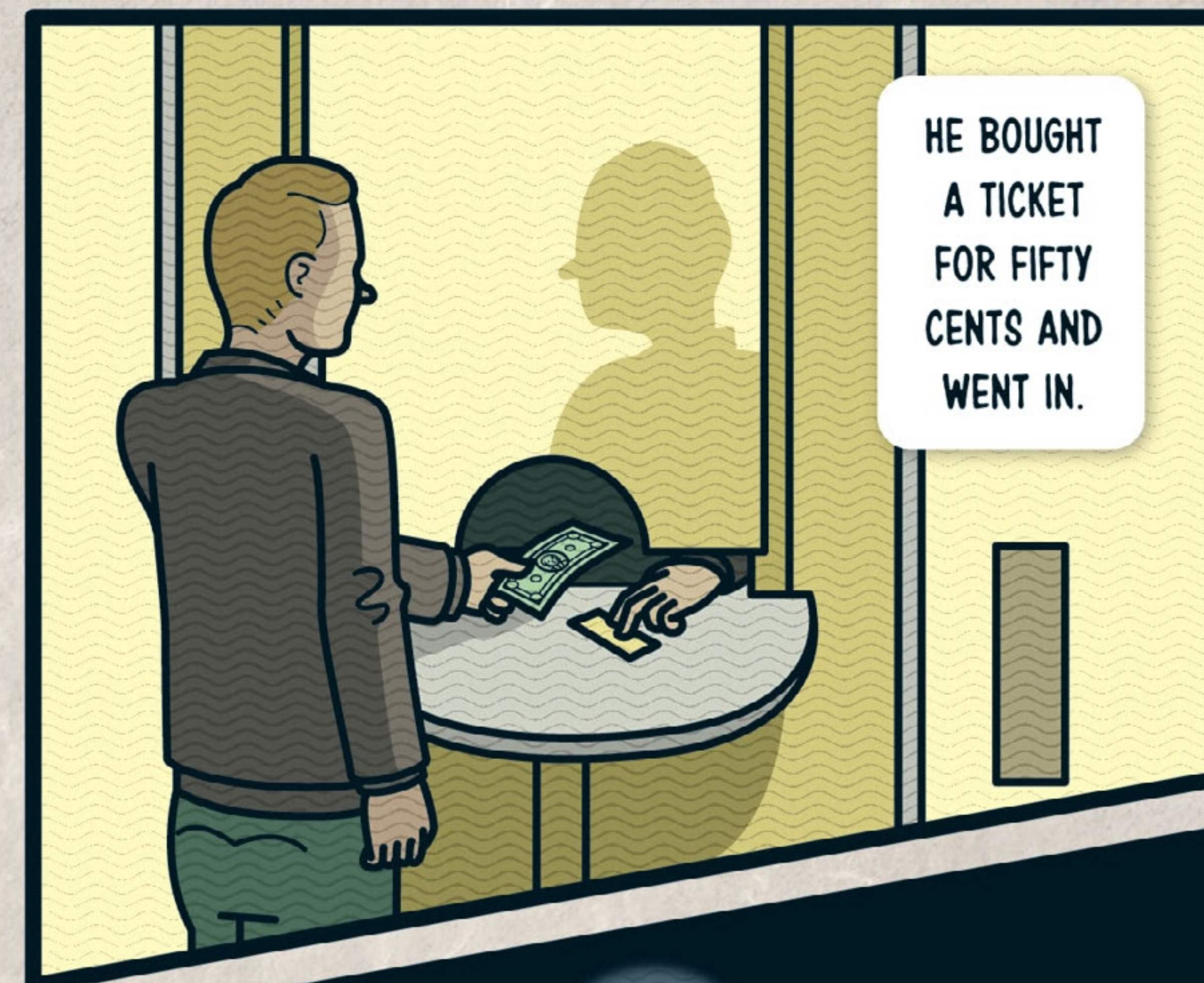
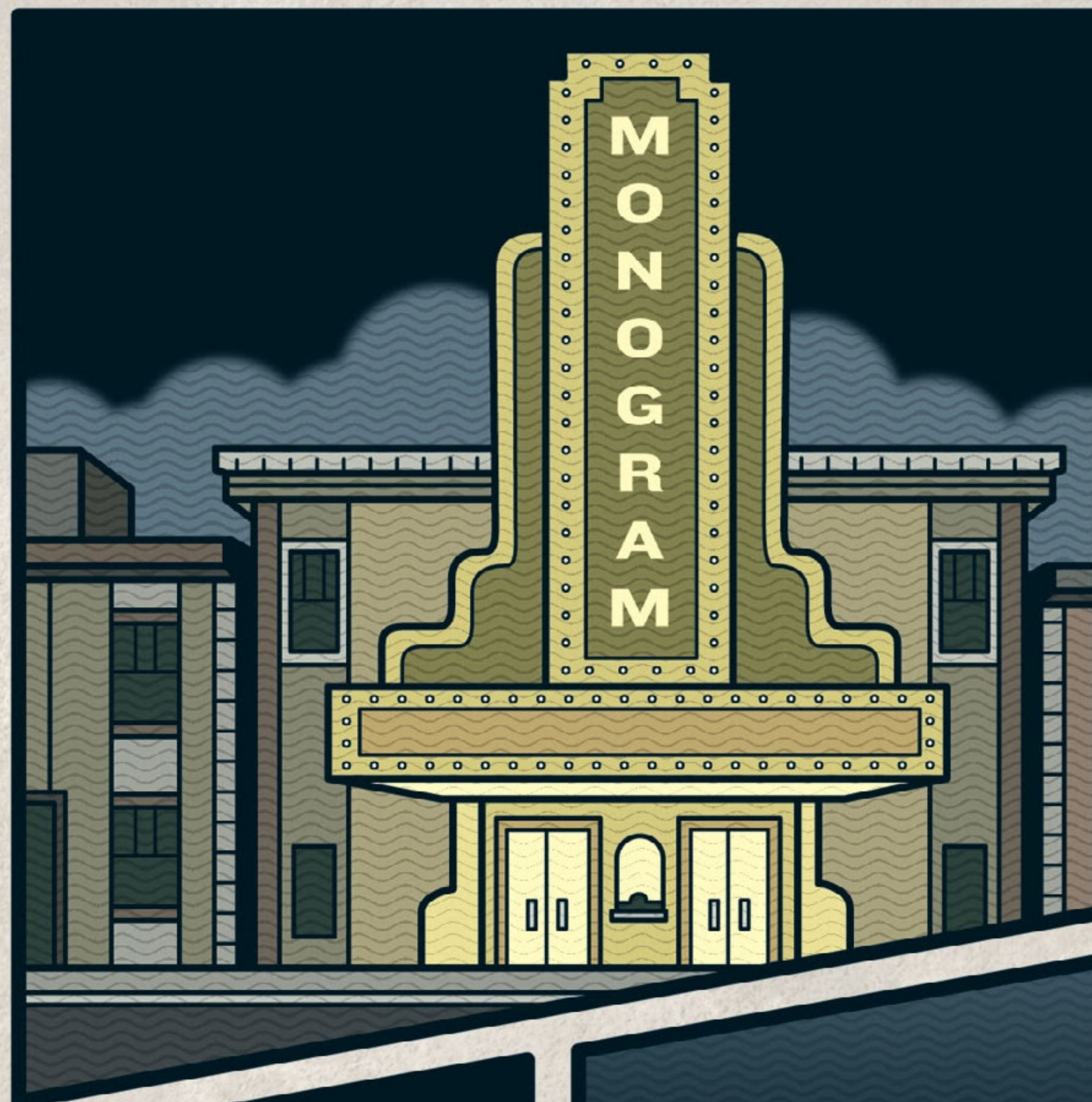
"PROWLER CALL.
200 BLOCK OF
SOUTH ALAMEDA.
FOUR REPORTS.
ALL UNITS."



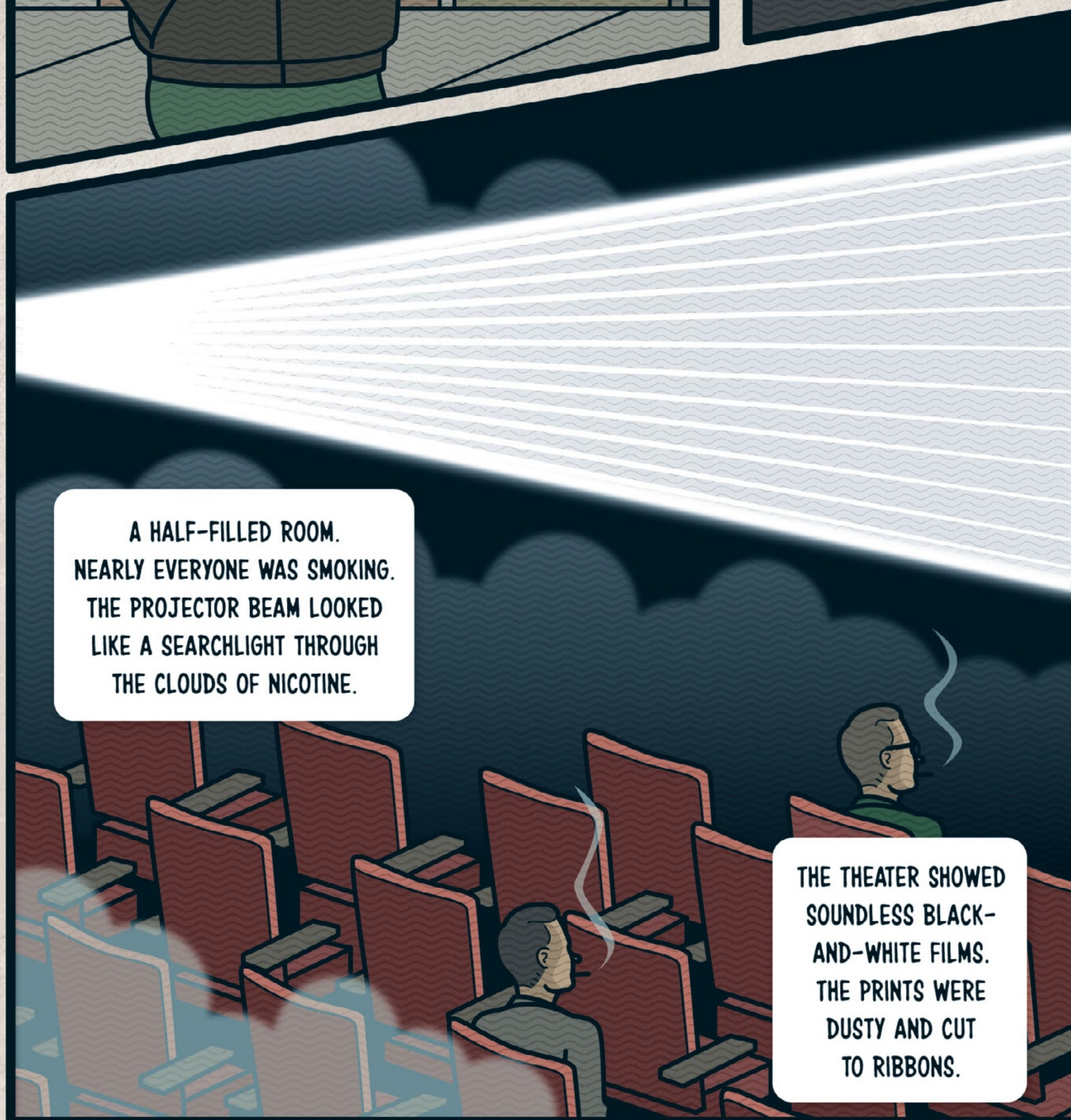
THE COP CAR
PEELED AWAY.



FROM THE END OF
THE DIMLY LIT
STREET, HE SAW
THE THEATER.



HE BOUGHT
A TICKET
FOR FIFTY
CENTS AND
WENT IN.



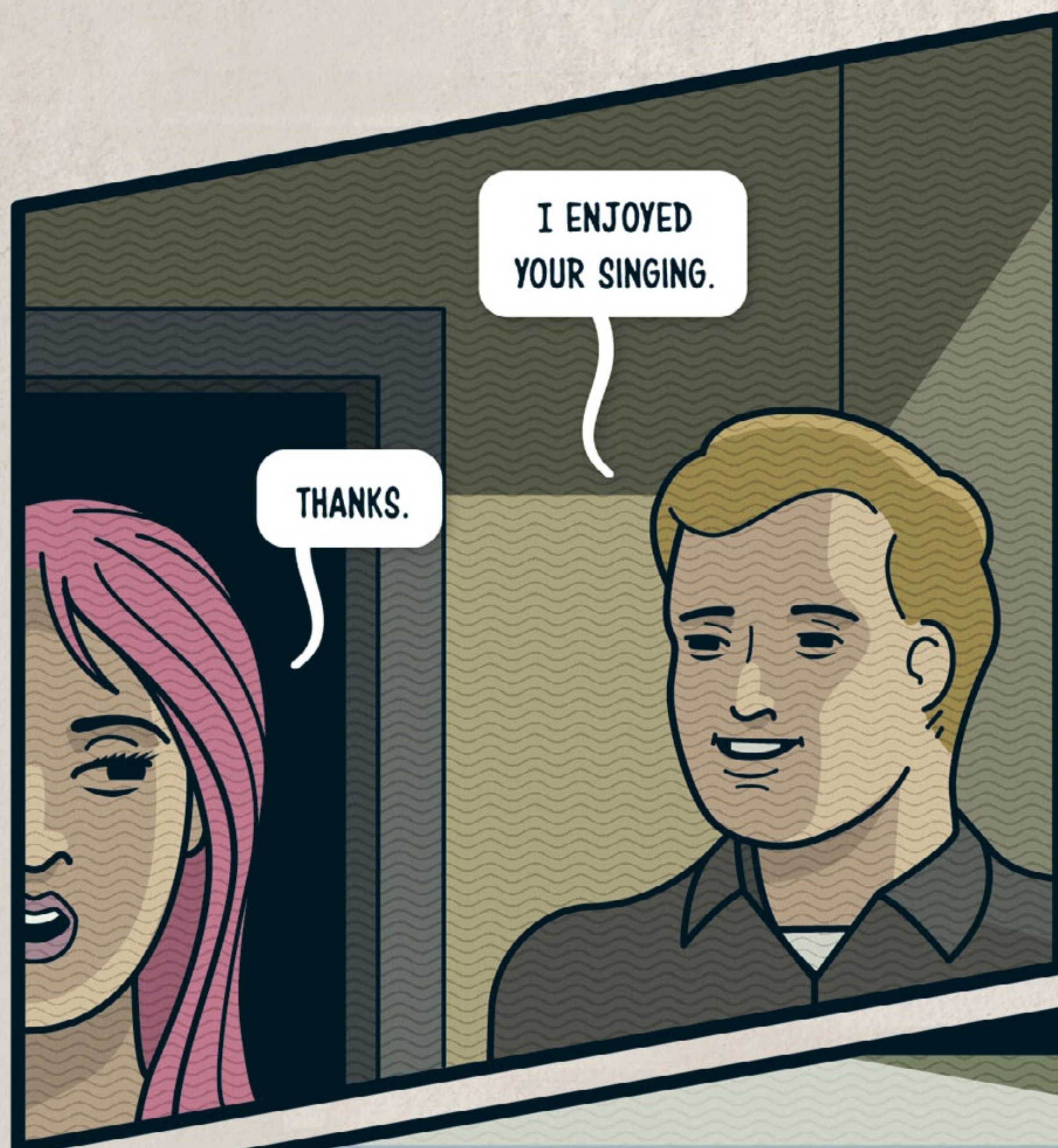
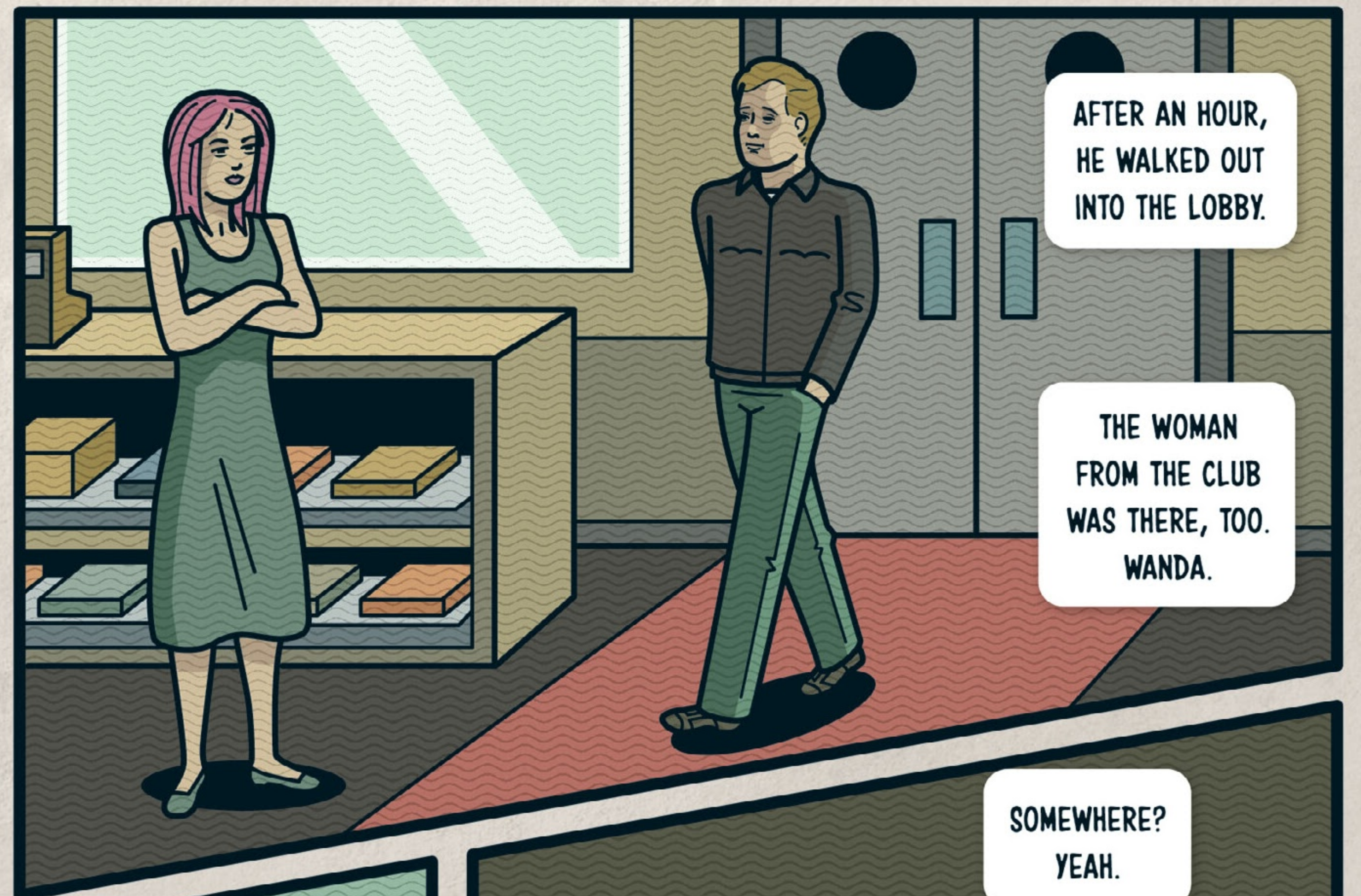
A HALF-FILLED ROOM.
NEARLY EVERYONE WAS SMOKING.
THE PROJECTOR BEAM LOOKED
LIKE A SEARCHLIGHT THROUGH
THE CLOUDS OF NICOTINE.

THE THEATER SHOWED
SOUNDLESS BLACK-
AND-WHITE FILMS.
THE PRINTS WERE
DUSTY AND CUT
TO RIBBONS.



HE SAT FOR A WHILE AND THOUGHT.
WOULD HE WAIT FOR RAYMOND TO
COME BACK? HE COULDN'T RUN
BECAUSE THERE WAS NOWHERE
TO RUN TO. THIS WAS IT.

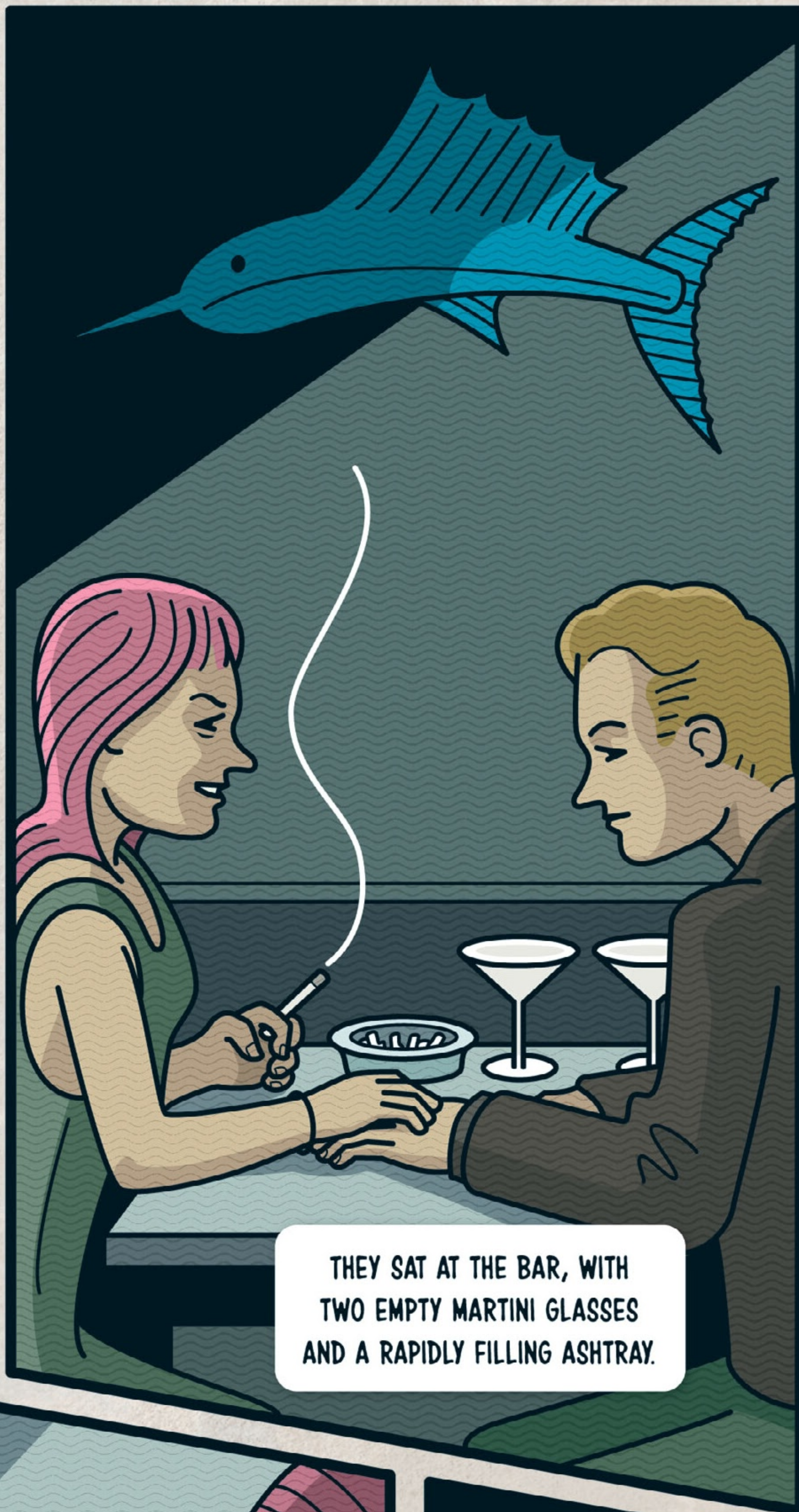
CHAPTER 3





THE DOORMAN
NODDED AS
THEY WALKED IN.

HEY,
WANDA.



THEY SAT AT THE BAR, WITH
TWO EMPTY MARTINI GLASSES
AND A RAPIDLY FILLING ASHTRAY.



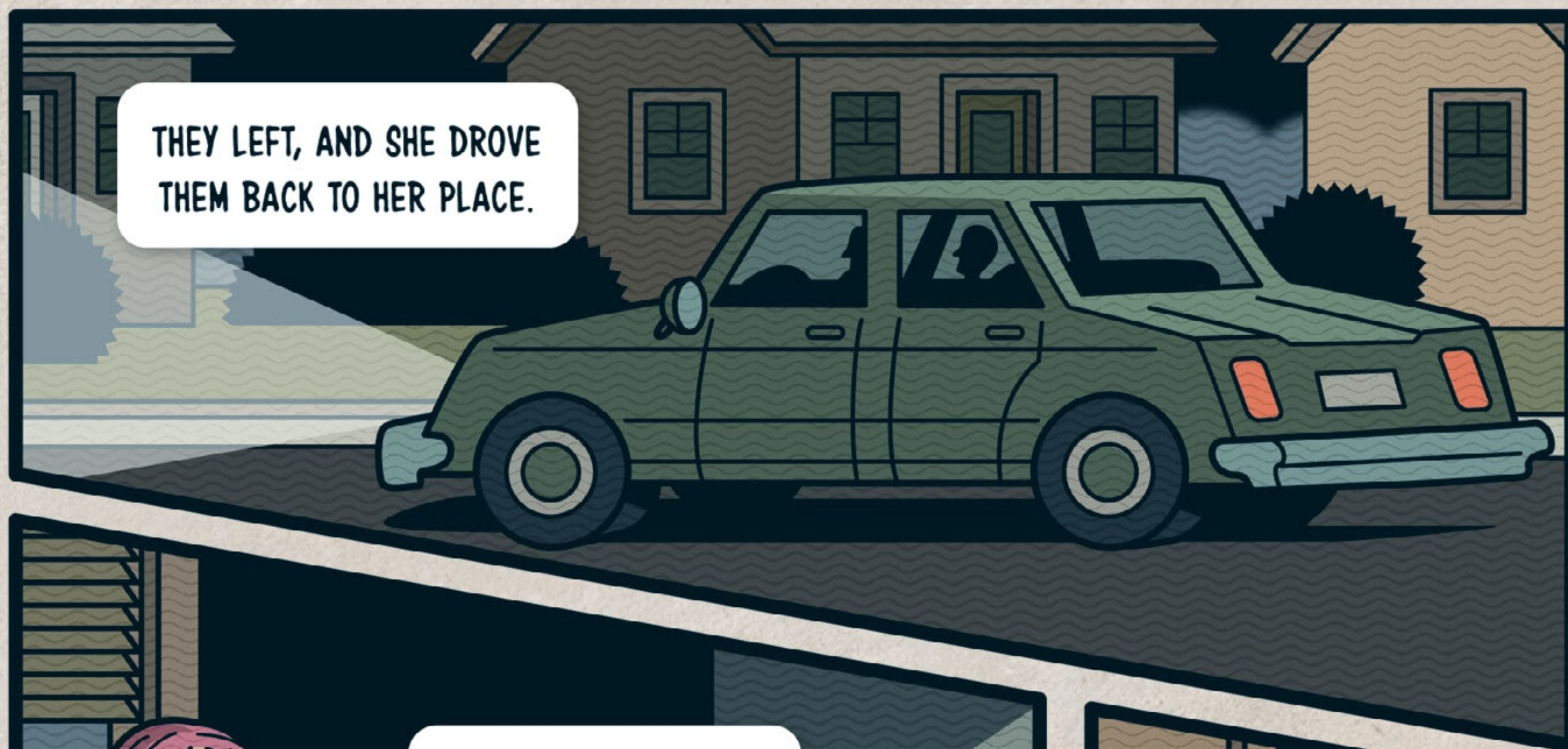
EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE
THE BARTENDER EMPTIED
THE ASHTRAY AND SET OUT
FRESH GLASSES.



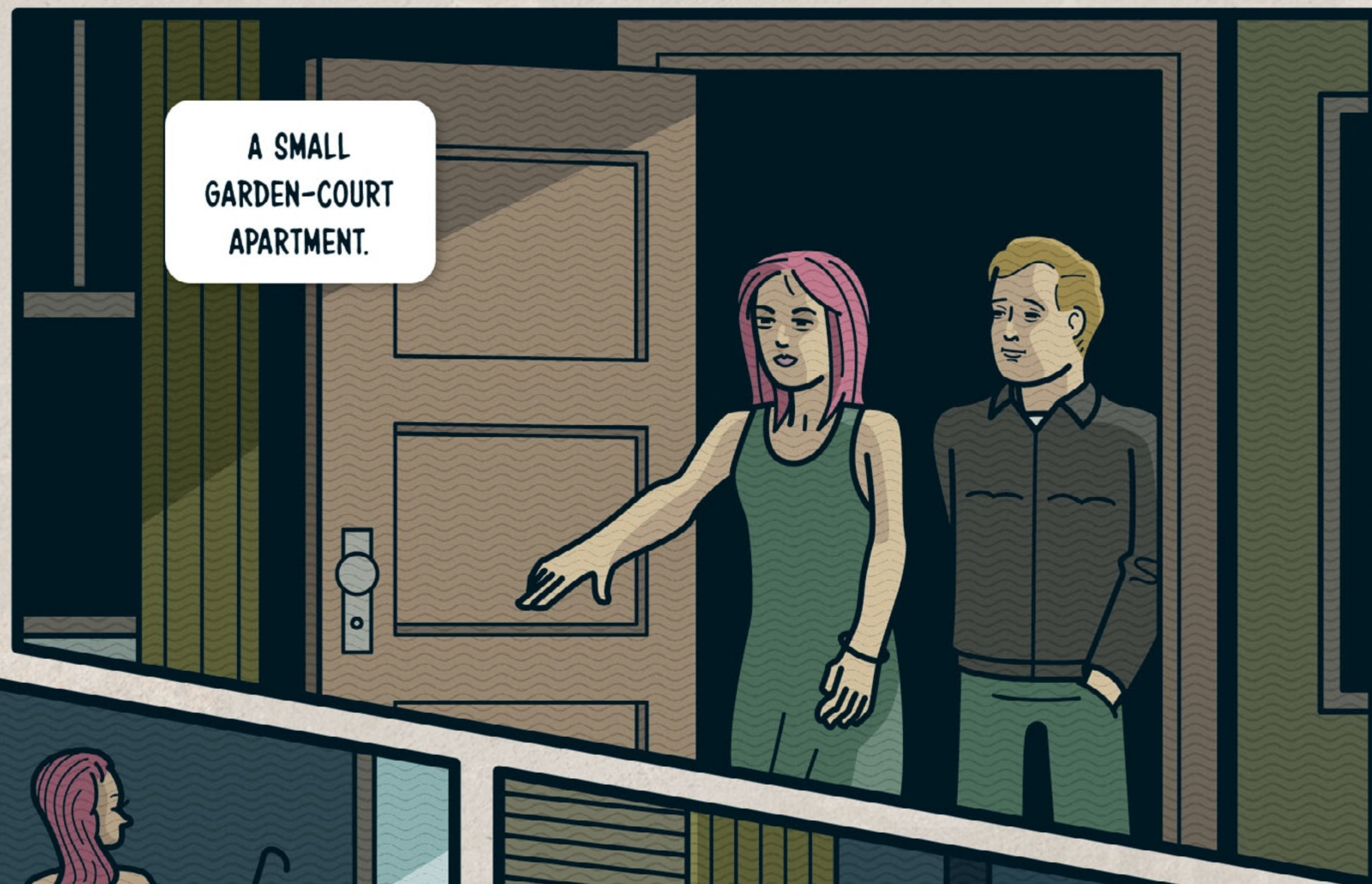
THAT WAS THE WORD
EVERYONE USED,
"ORIGINALLY."



READY?



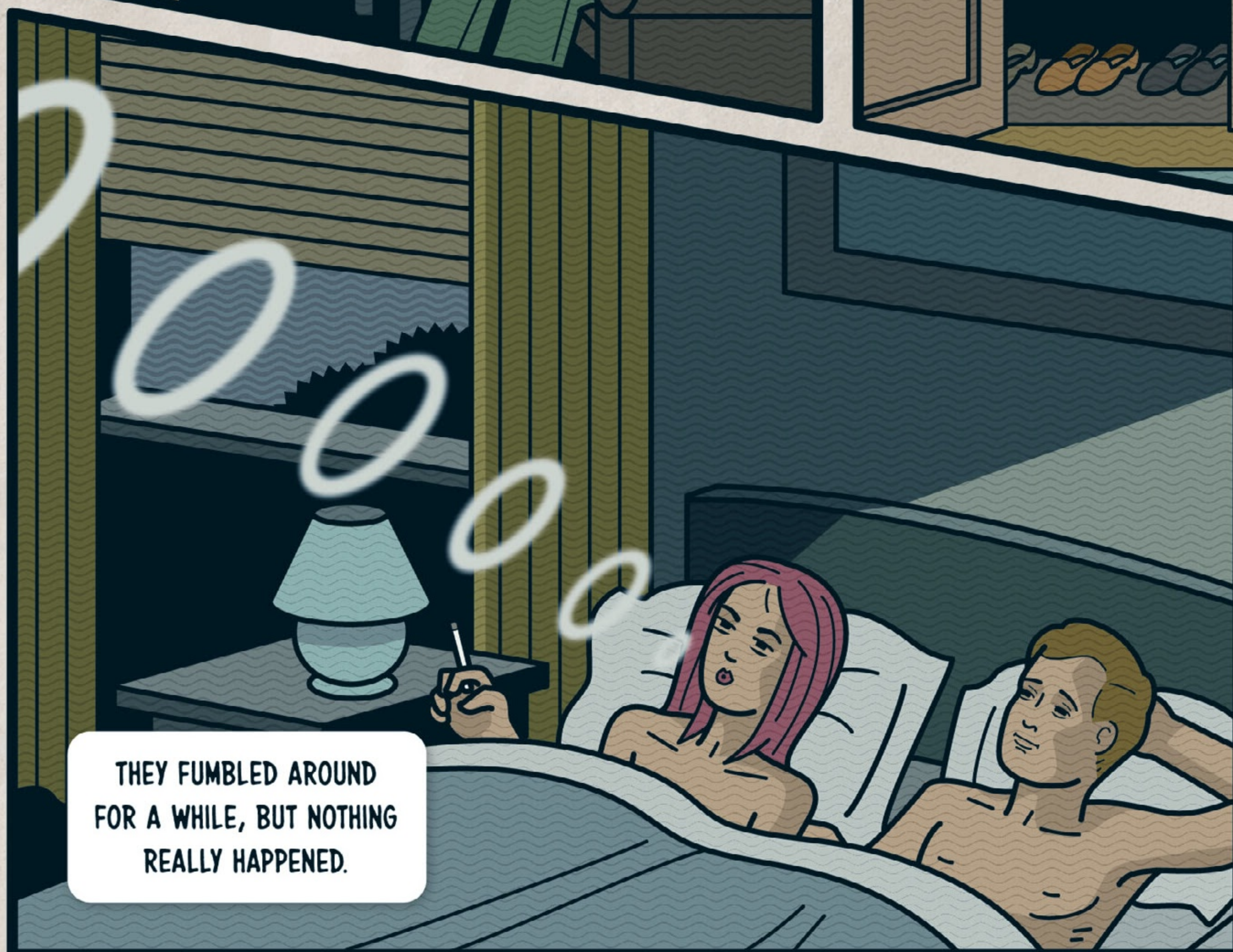
THEY LEFT, AND SHE DROVE
THEM BACK TO HER PLACE.



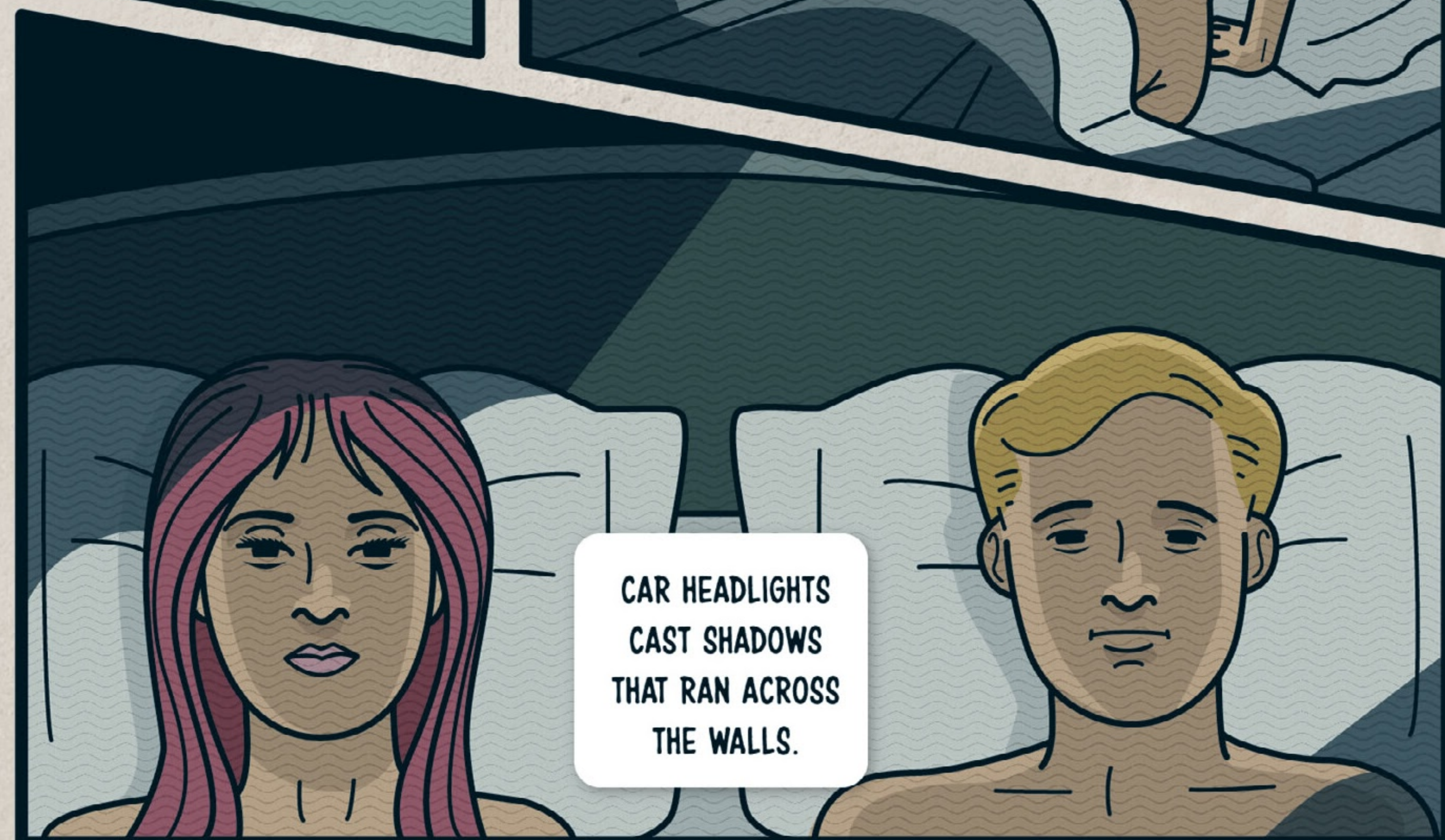
A SMALL
GARDEN-COURT
APARTMENT.



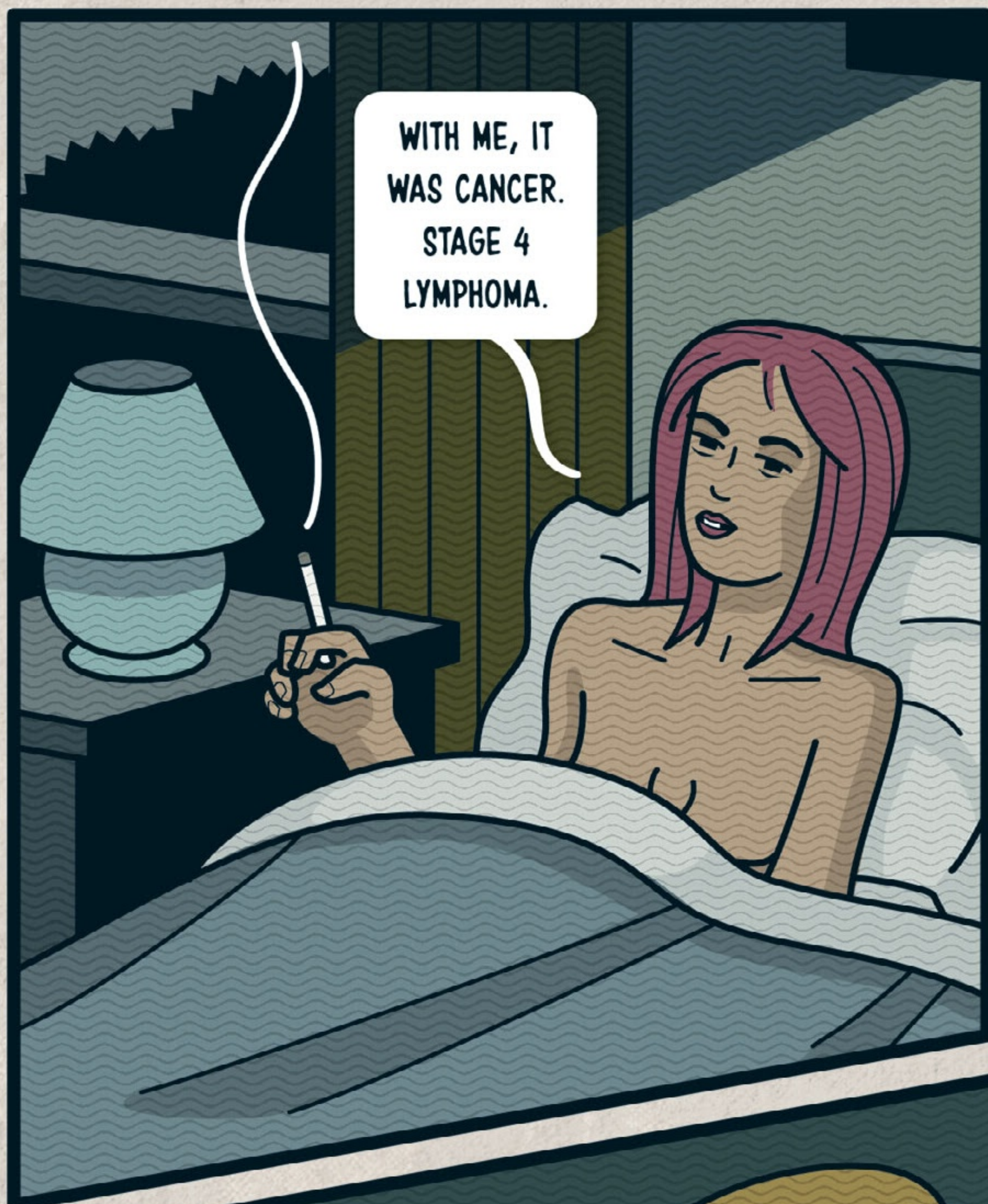
THEY SAT THERE,
TALKING AND SMOKING
UNTIL WANDA GOT UP.



THEY FUMBLING AROUND
FOR A WHILE, BUT NOTHING
REALLY HAPPENED.



CAR HEADLIGHTS
CAST SHADOWS
THAT RAN ACROSS
THE WALLS.



WITH ME, IT WAS CANCER.
STAGE 4
LYMPHOMA.



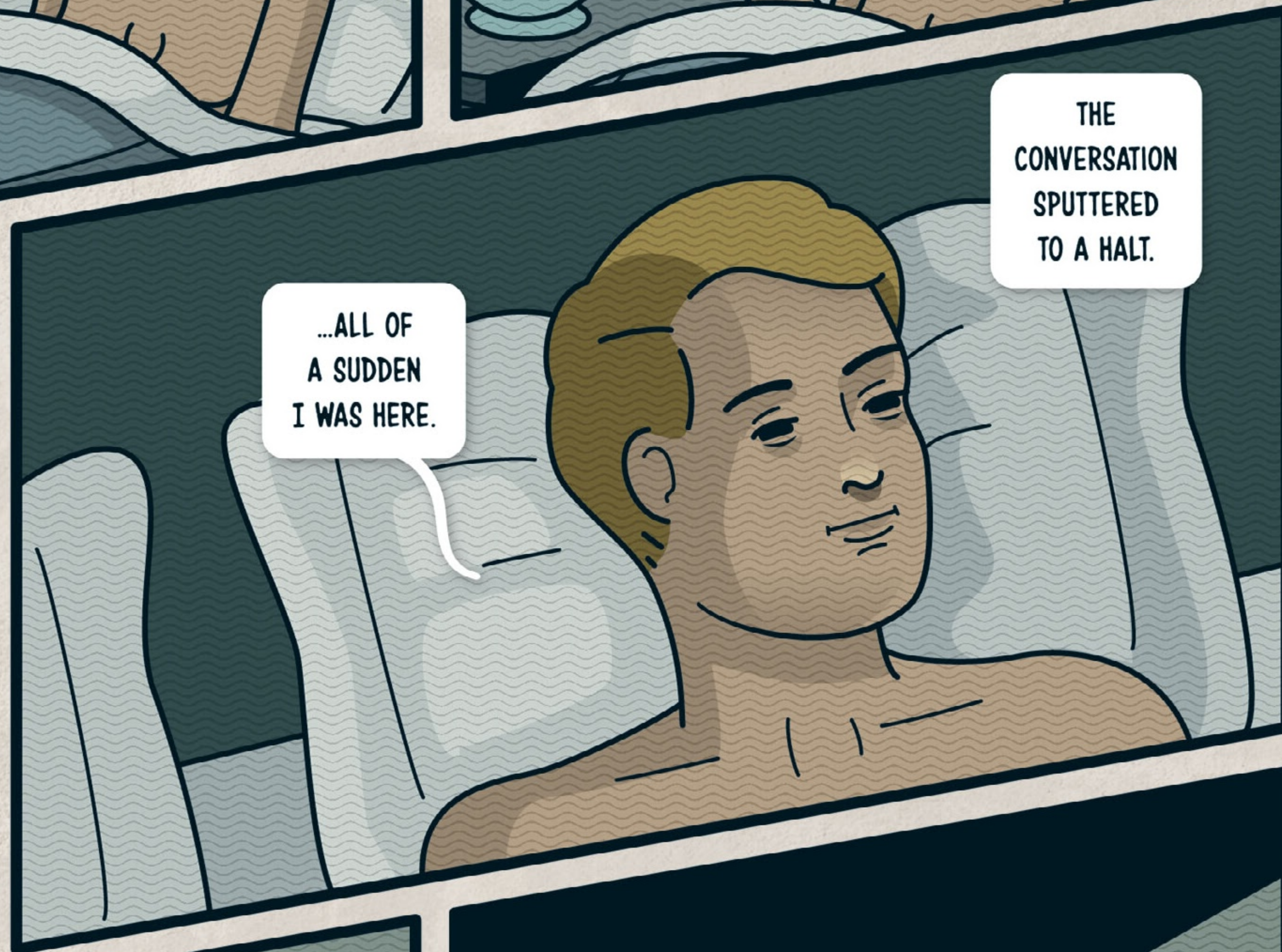
I CAN STILL
REMEMBER
HOW THE
ICU SMELLED.



I DON'T REALLY
MIND IT HERE.
THE TRAFFIC
IS WORSE, BUT
I LIKE MY JOB.



YEAH, IT WAS
OUT OF THE
BLUE FOR ME...

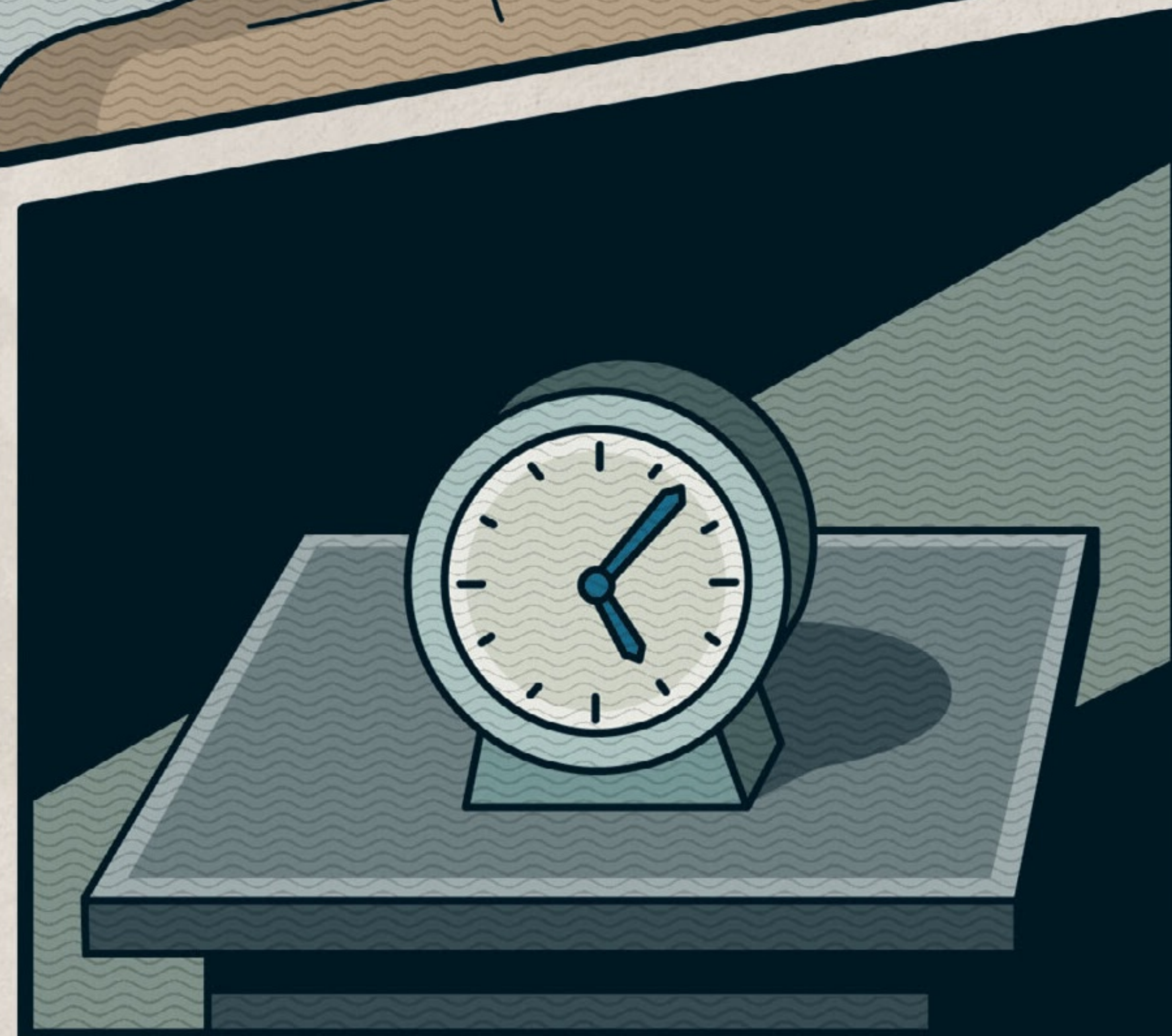


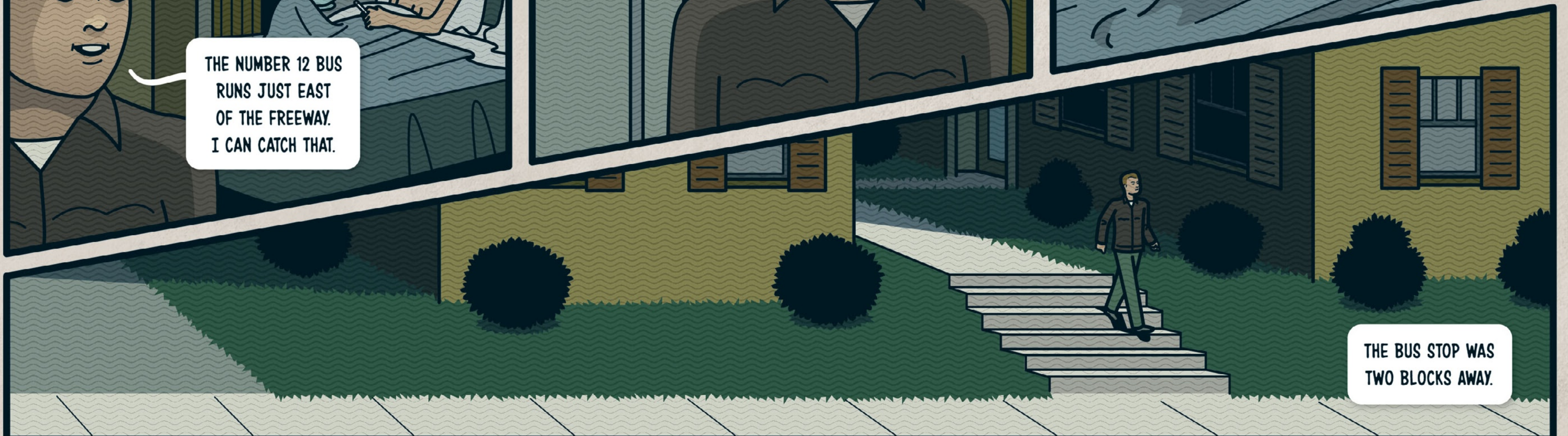
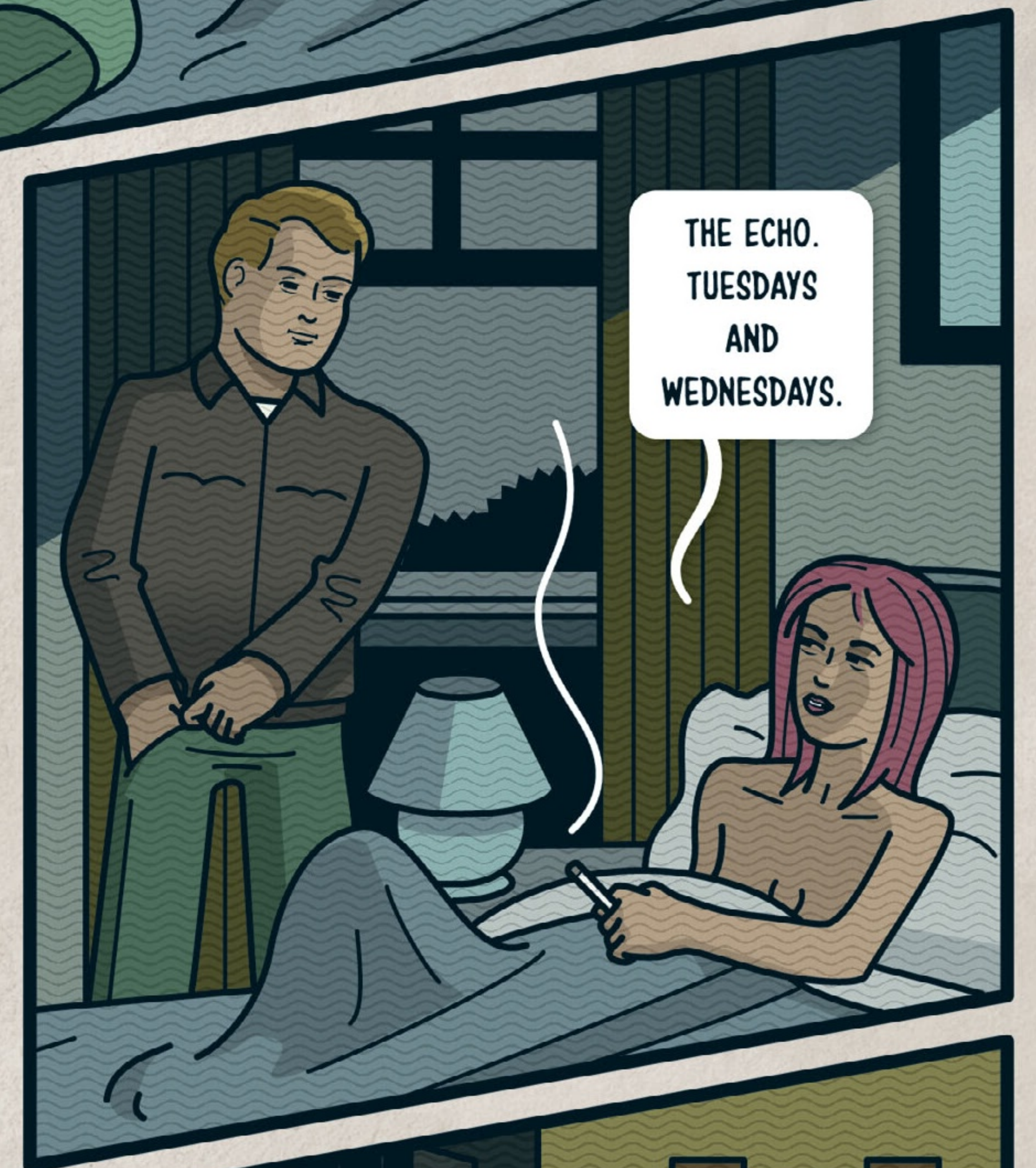
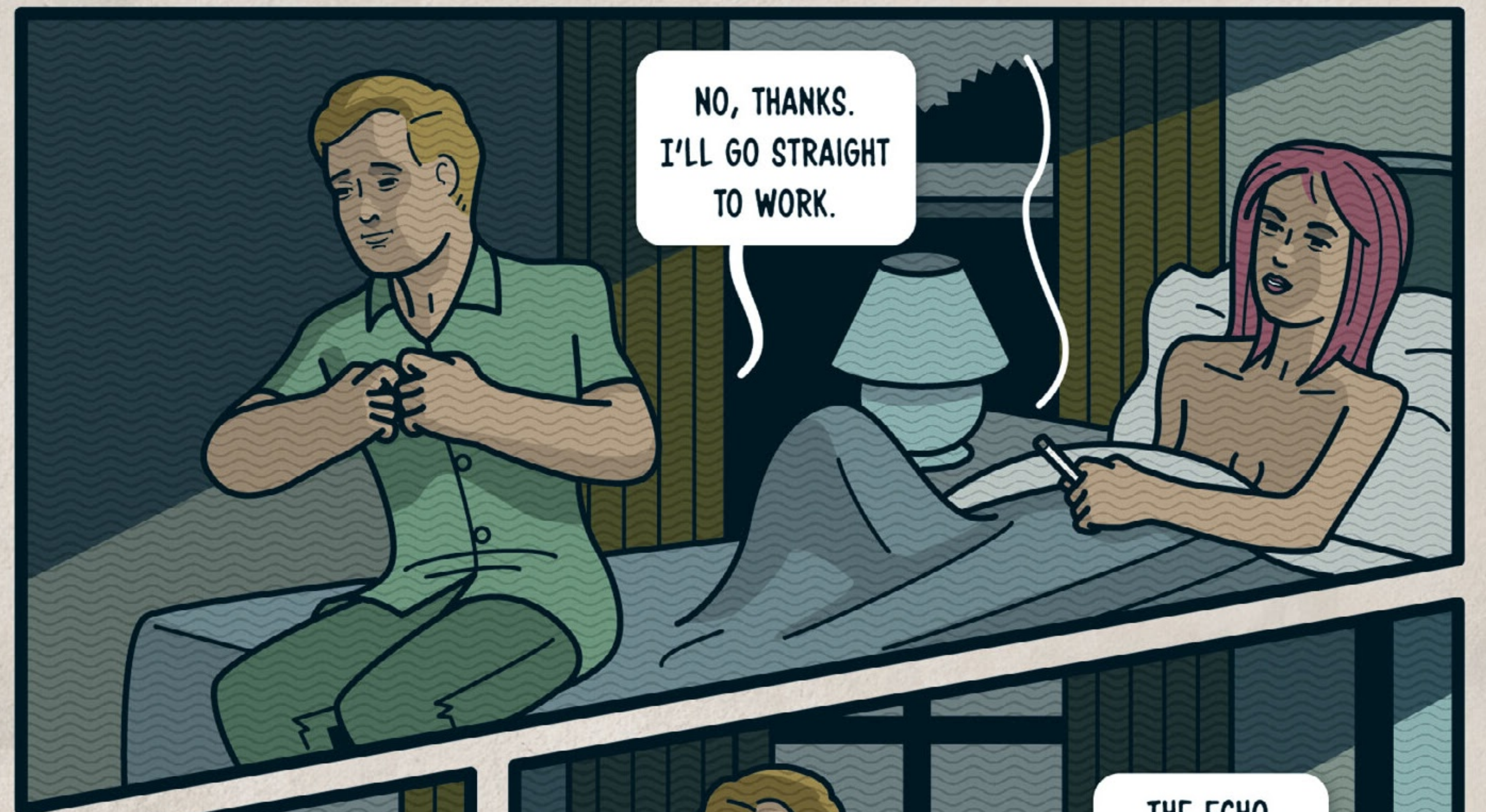
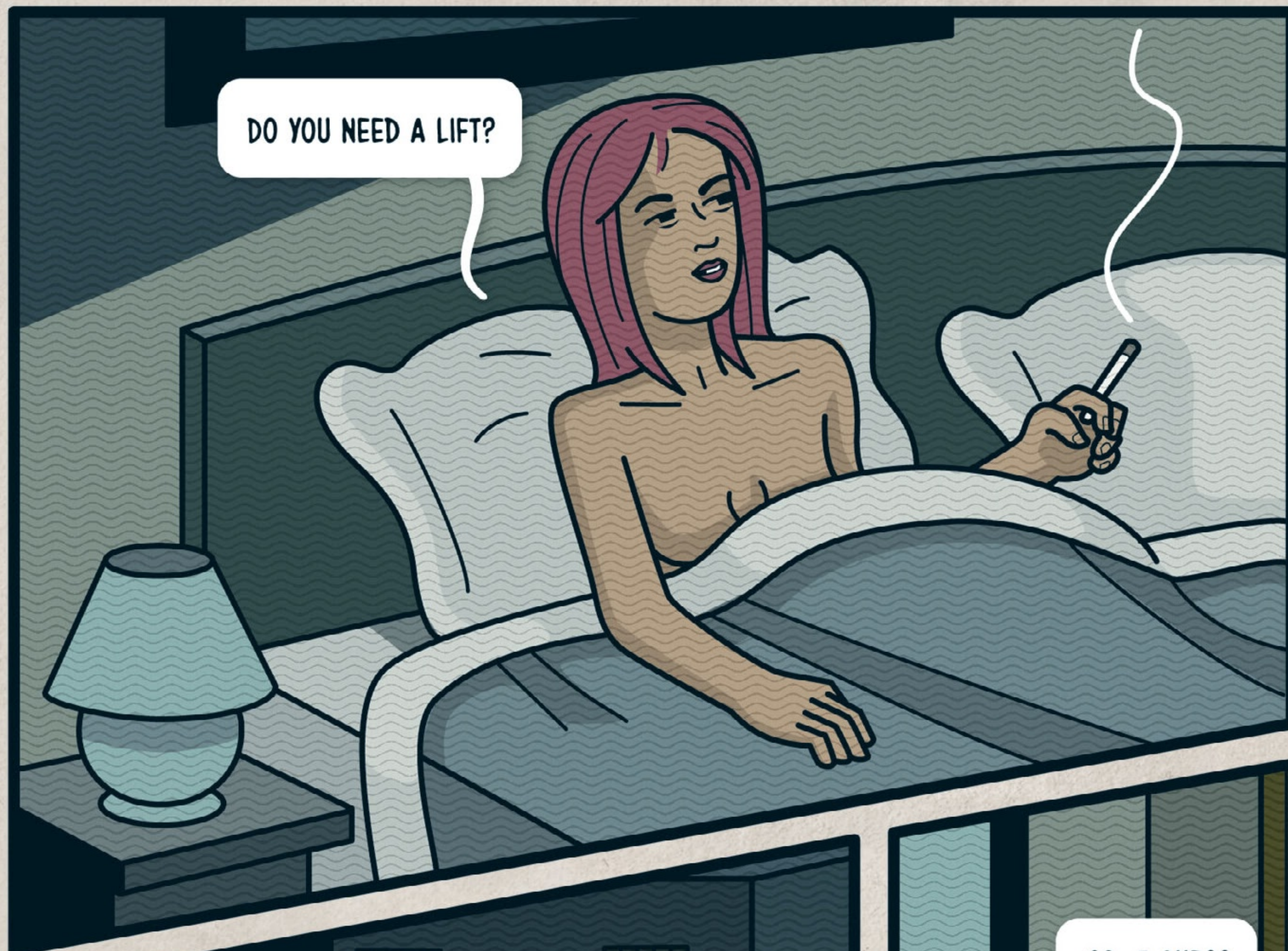
...ALL OF
A SUDDEN
I WAS HERE.

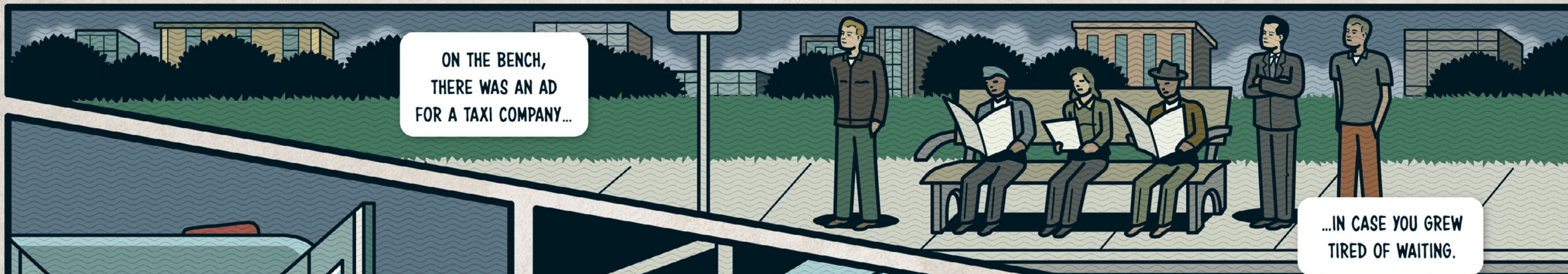
THE
CONVERSATION
SPUTTERED
TO A HALT.



THEY BOTH LAY THERE
AND LOOKED UP AT THE CEILING.







ON THE BENCH,
THERE WAS AN AD
FOR A TAXI COMPANY...

...IN CASE YOU GREW
TIRED OF WAITING.

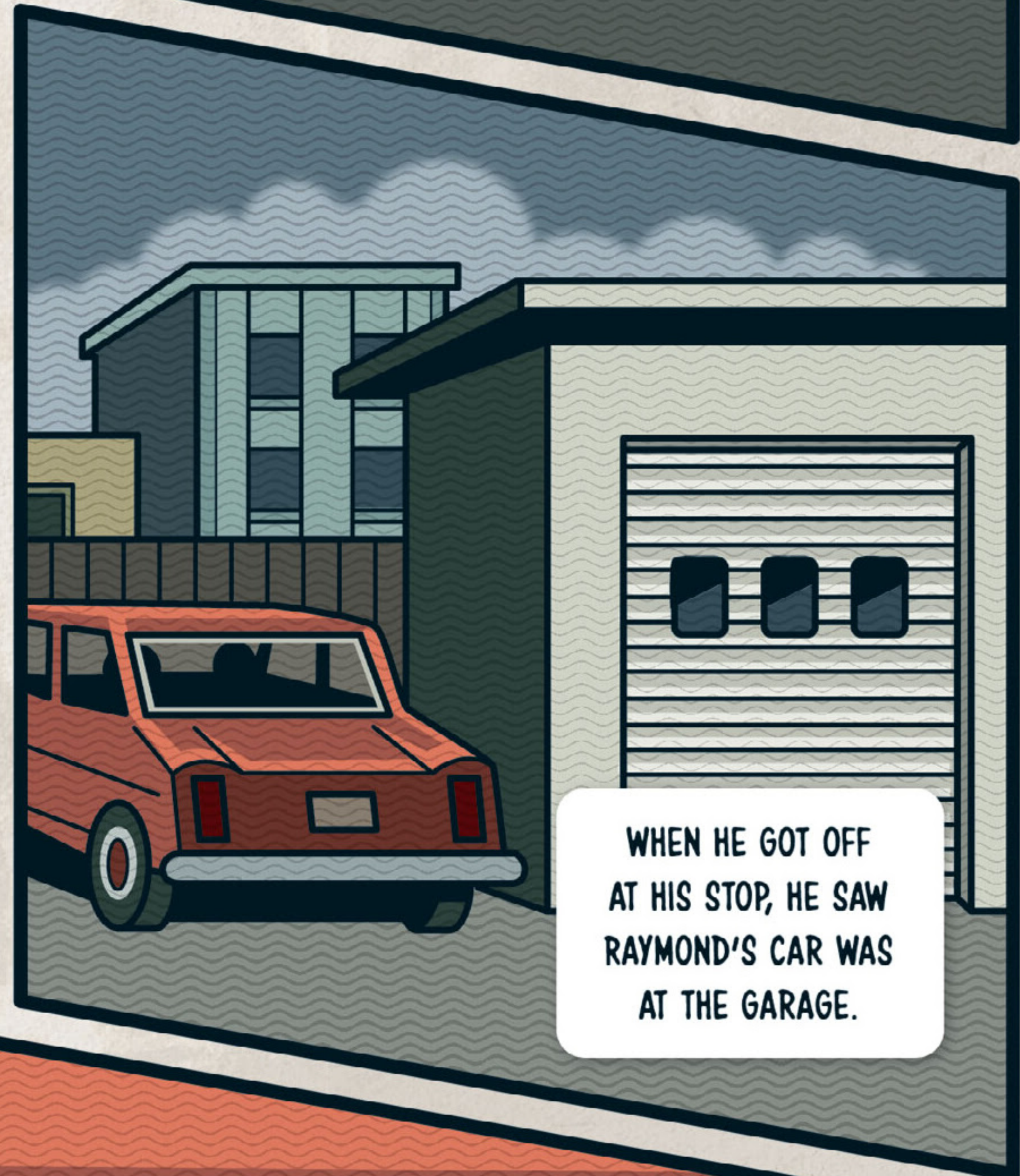


THE BUS ARRIVED.
IT WAS ALREADY
THREE-QUARTERS
FILLED.



WANT A TRANSFER?

HE SHOOK
HIS HEAD NO.



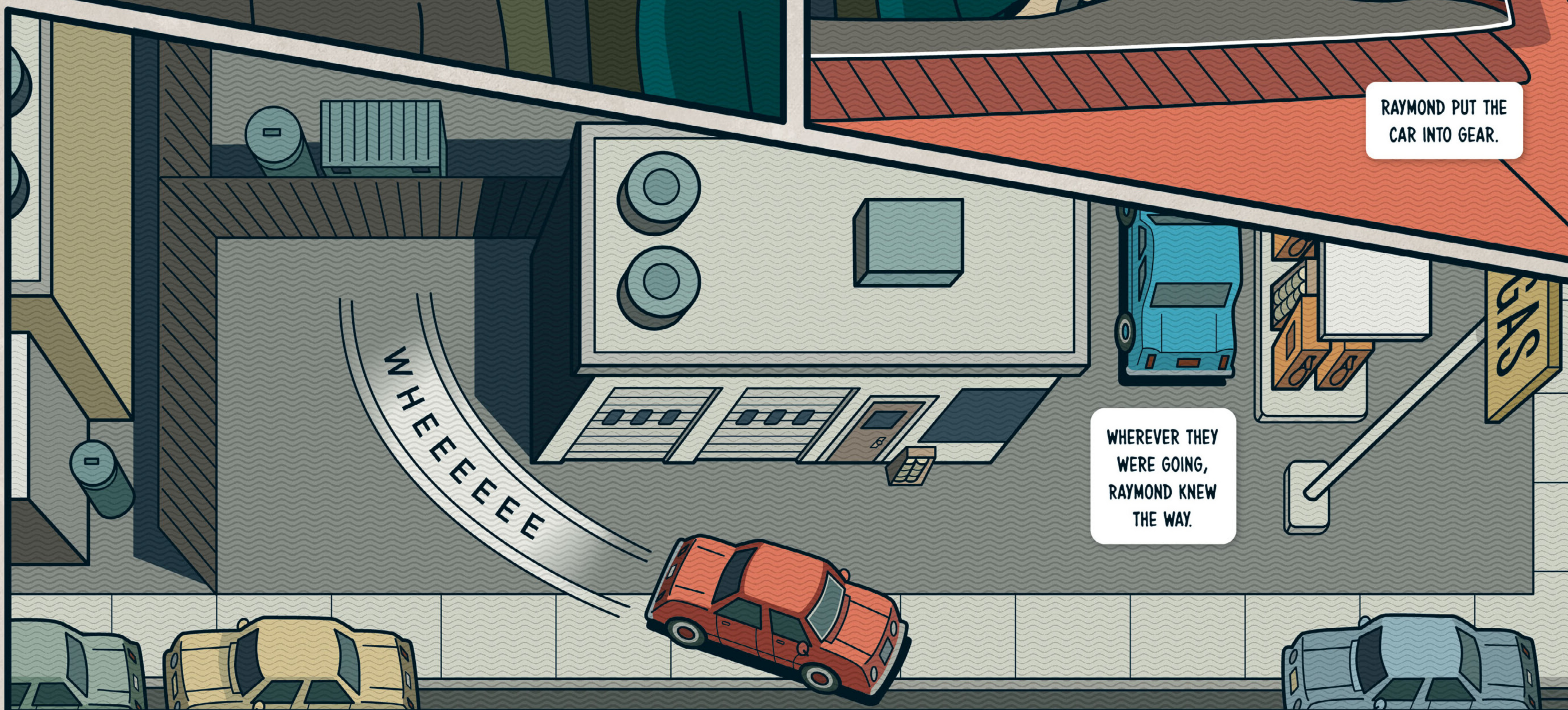
WHEN HE GOT OFF
AT HIS STOP, HE SAW
RAYMOND'S CAR WAS
AT THE GARAGE.

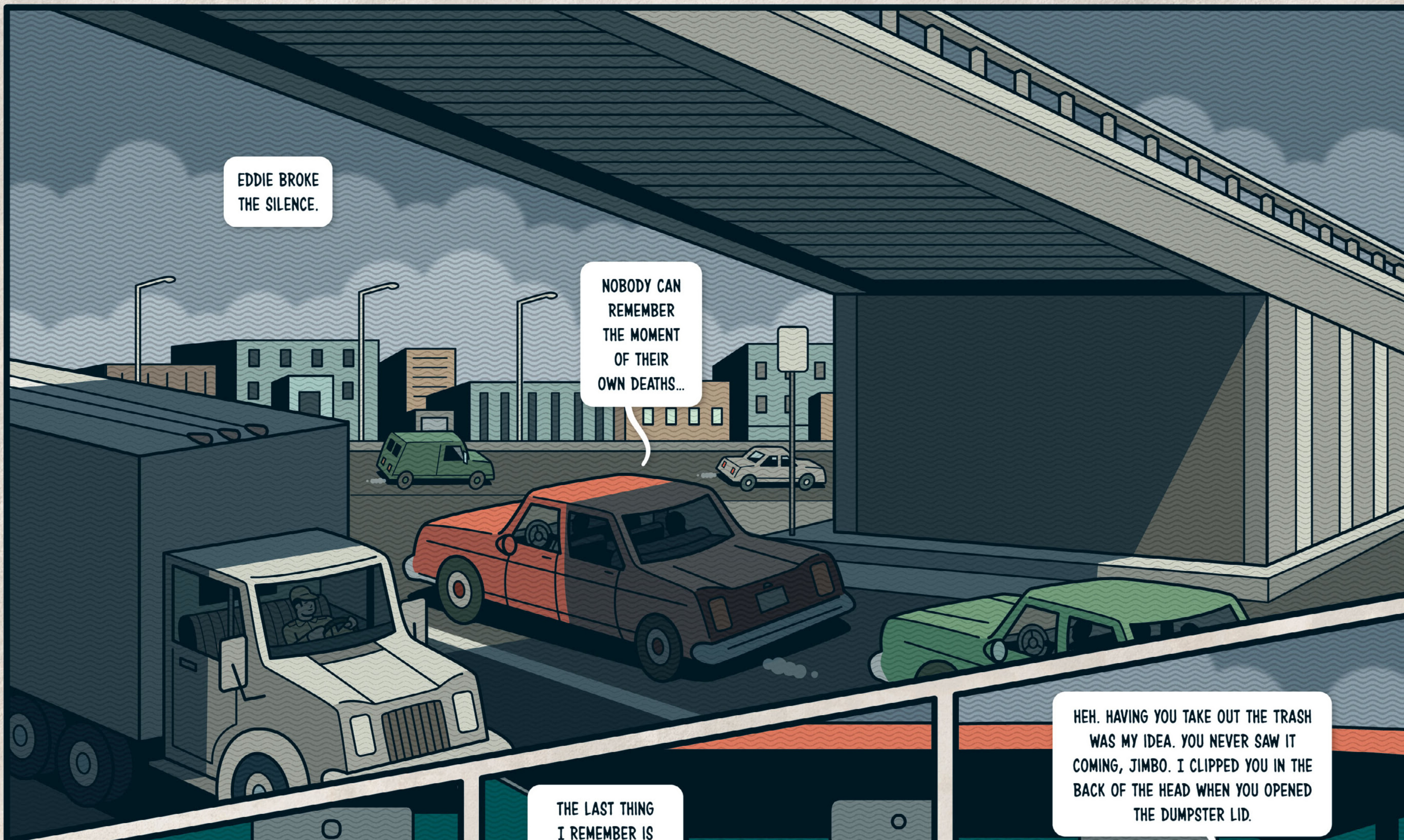


JUST LIKE OLD
TIMES, JIMBO.



HELLO,
EDDIE.





EDDIE BROKE
THE SILENCE.

NOBODY CAN
REMEMBER
THE MOMENT
OF THEIR
OWN DEATHS...



...BUT IN YOUR
PARTICULAR CASE,
JIM, WE CAN SHED
A LITTLE LIGHT.



THE LAST THING
I REMEMBER IS
EMPTYING THE TRASH
INTO THE DUMPSTER
BEHIND THE CLUB.

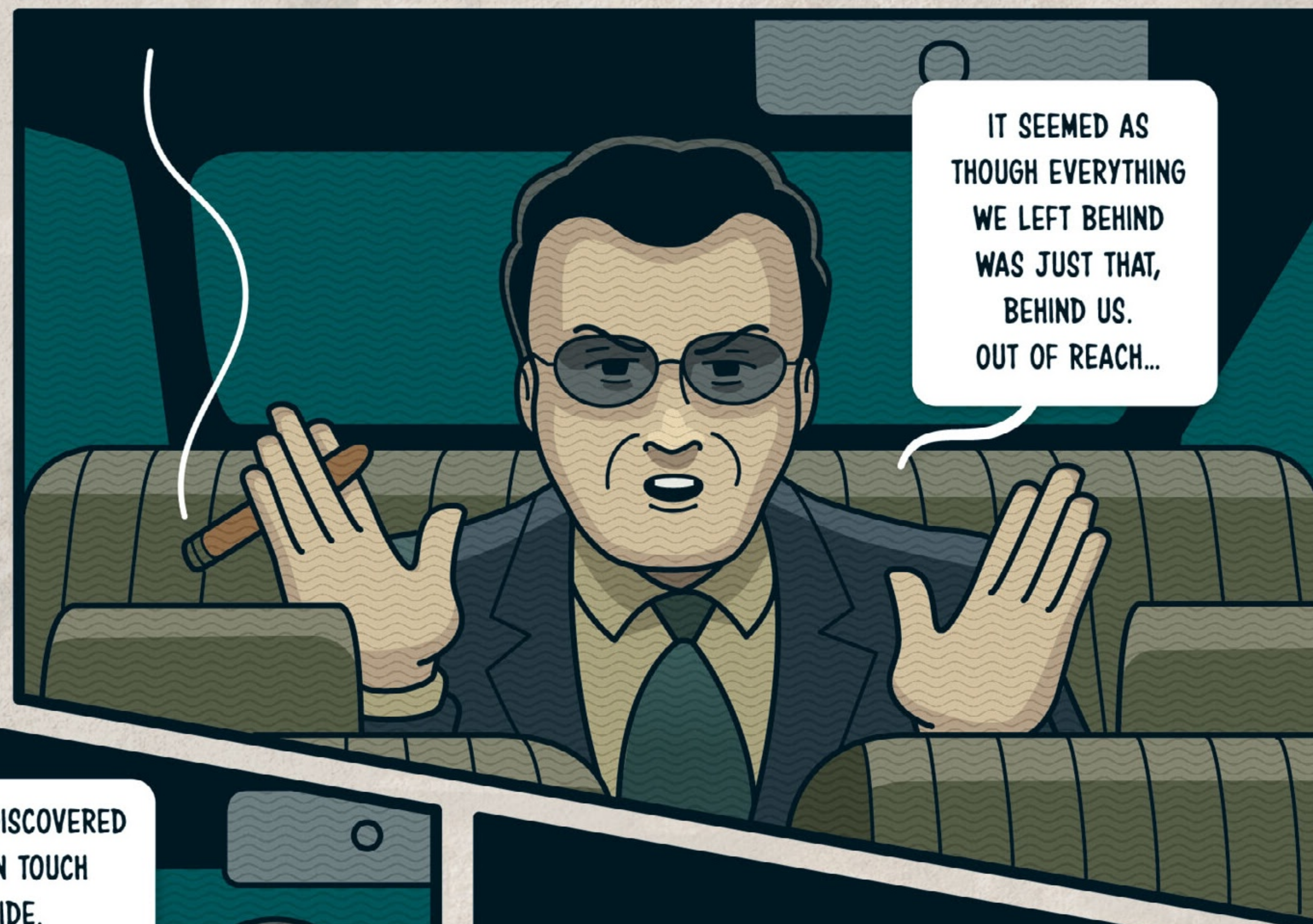


HEH. HAVING YOU TAKE OUT THE TRASH
WAS MY IDEA. YOU NEVER SAW IT
COMING, JIMBO. I CLIPPED YOU IN THE
BACK OF THE HEAD WHEN YOU OPENED
THE DUMPSTER LID.





IN A WAY, IT'S A STROKE OF LUCK
THAT WE FOUND YOU. SOMETHING
HAS COME TO LIGHT THAT HAS
CHANGED OUR CONDITION.



IT SEEMED AS
THOUGH EVERYTHING
WE LEFT BEHIND
WAS JUST THAT,
BEHIND US.
OUT OF REACH...



...BUT RECENTLY, WE'VE DISCOVERED
A WAY TO GET BACK IN TOUCH
WITH THE OTHER SIDE.

YOU MUST BE
TELLING ME ALL THIS
FOR A REASON?



RAYMOND WILL PICK YOU UP AT THE
NEWSSTAND AT 9 P.M. I STRONGLY
ADVISE YOU TO BE THERE.



YOU ARE FREE TO GO.



AND JIM,
THERE ARE PLACES
FAR WORSE THAN HERE.
REMEMBER THAT.

CHAPTER

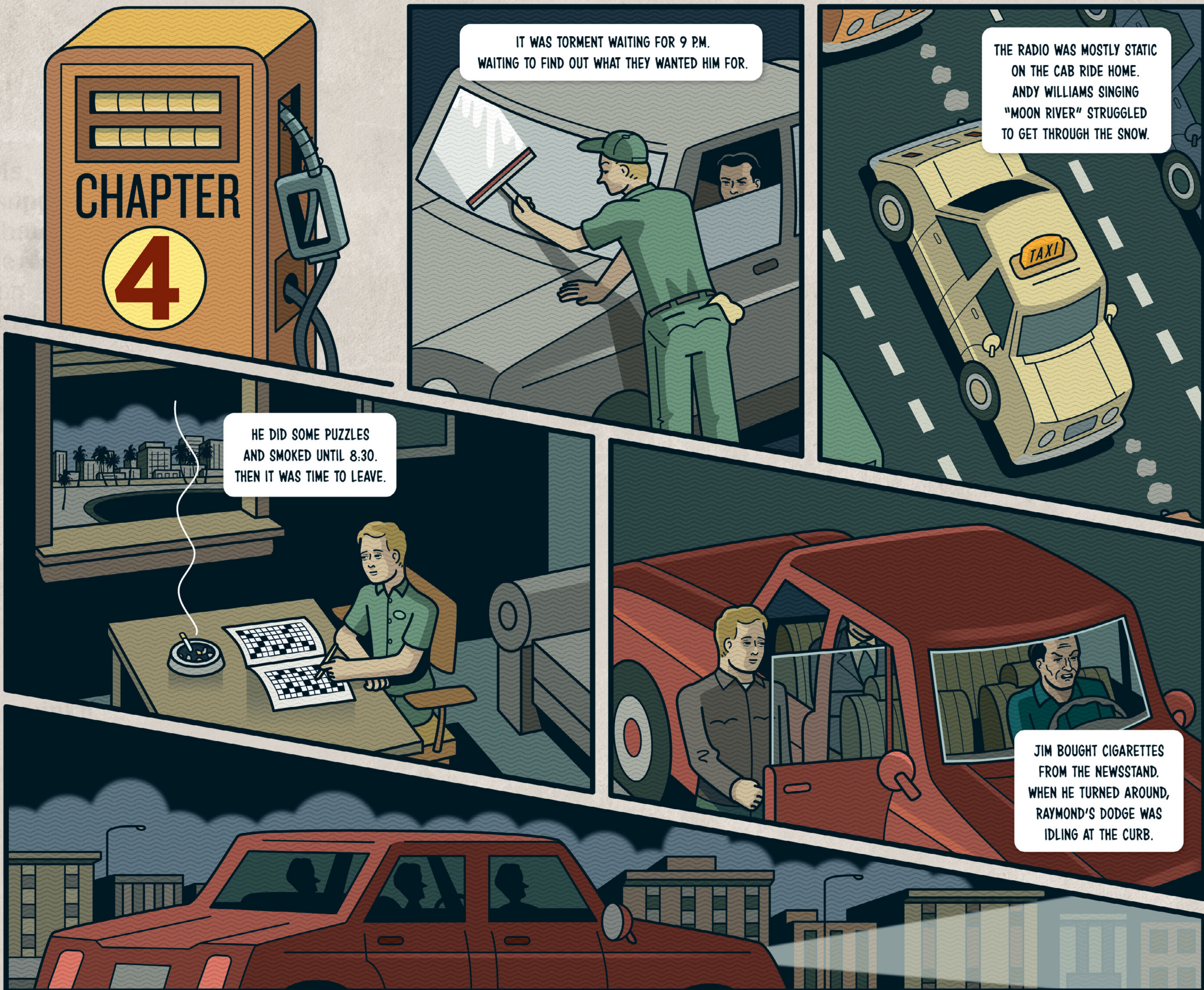
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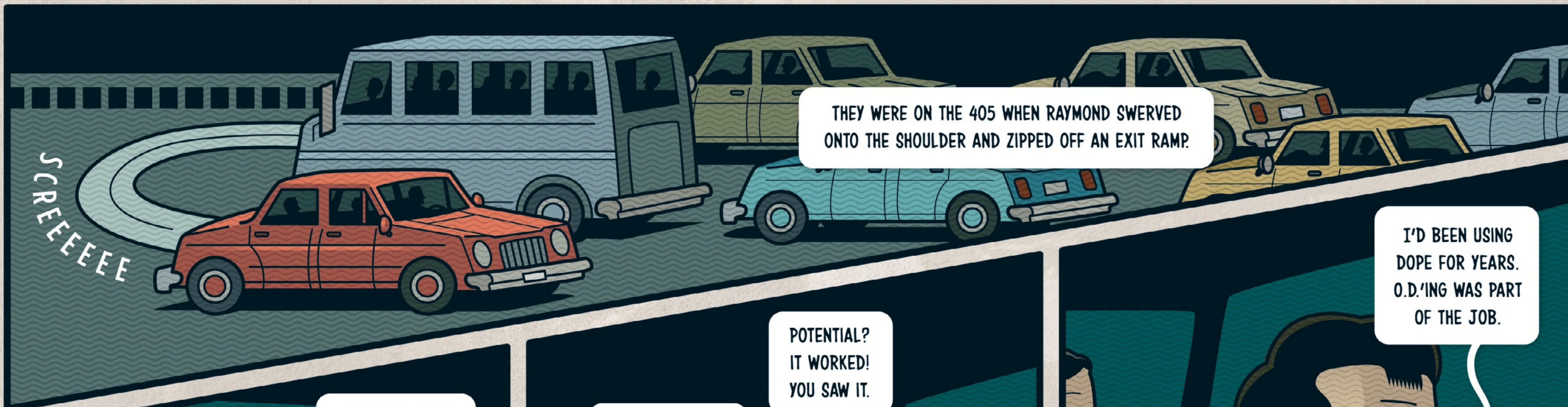
IT WAS TORMENT WAITING FOR 9 P.M.
WAITING TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANTED HIM FOR.

THE RADIO WAS MOSTLY STATIC
ON THE CAB RIDE HOME.
ANDY WILLIAMS SINGING
"MOON RIVER" STRUGGLED
TO GET THROUGH THE SNOW.

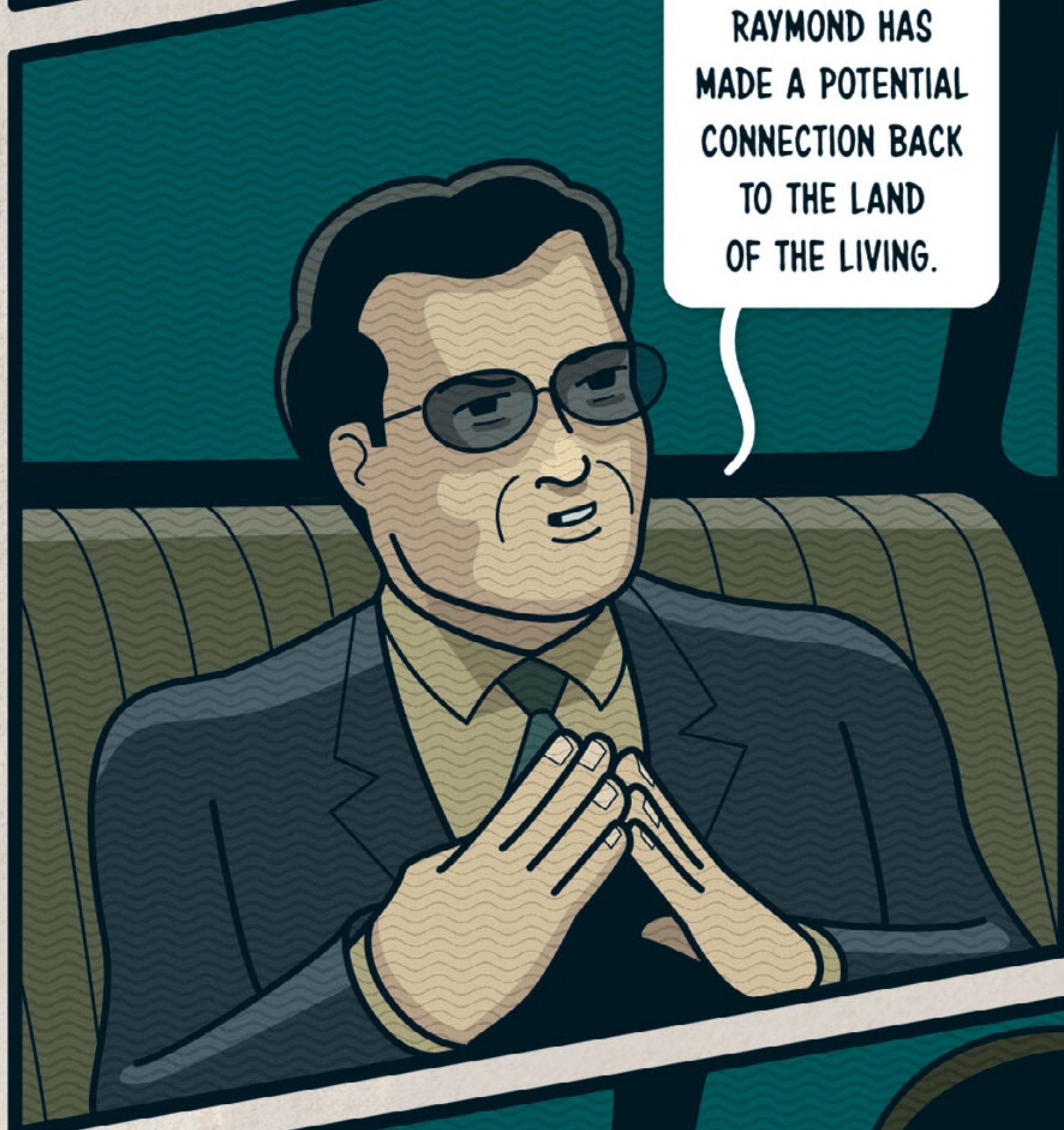
HE DID SOME PUZZLES
AND SMOKED UNTIL 8:30.
THEN IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE.

JIM BOUGHT CIGARETTES
FROM THE NEWSSTAND.
WHEN HE TURNED AROUND,
RAYMOND'S DODGE WAS
IDLING AT THE CURB.





THEY WERE ON THE 405 WHEN RAYMOND SWERVED ONTO THE SHOULDER AND ZIPPED OFF AN EXIT RAMP.



RAYMOND HAS MADE A POTENTIAL CONNECTION BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.



GO AHEAD, THEN, RAYMOND. TELL HIM WHAT YOU FOUND.

POTENTIAL? IT WORKED! YOU SAW IT.



I'D BEEN USING DOPE FOR YEARS. O.D.'ING WAS PART OF THE JOB.

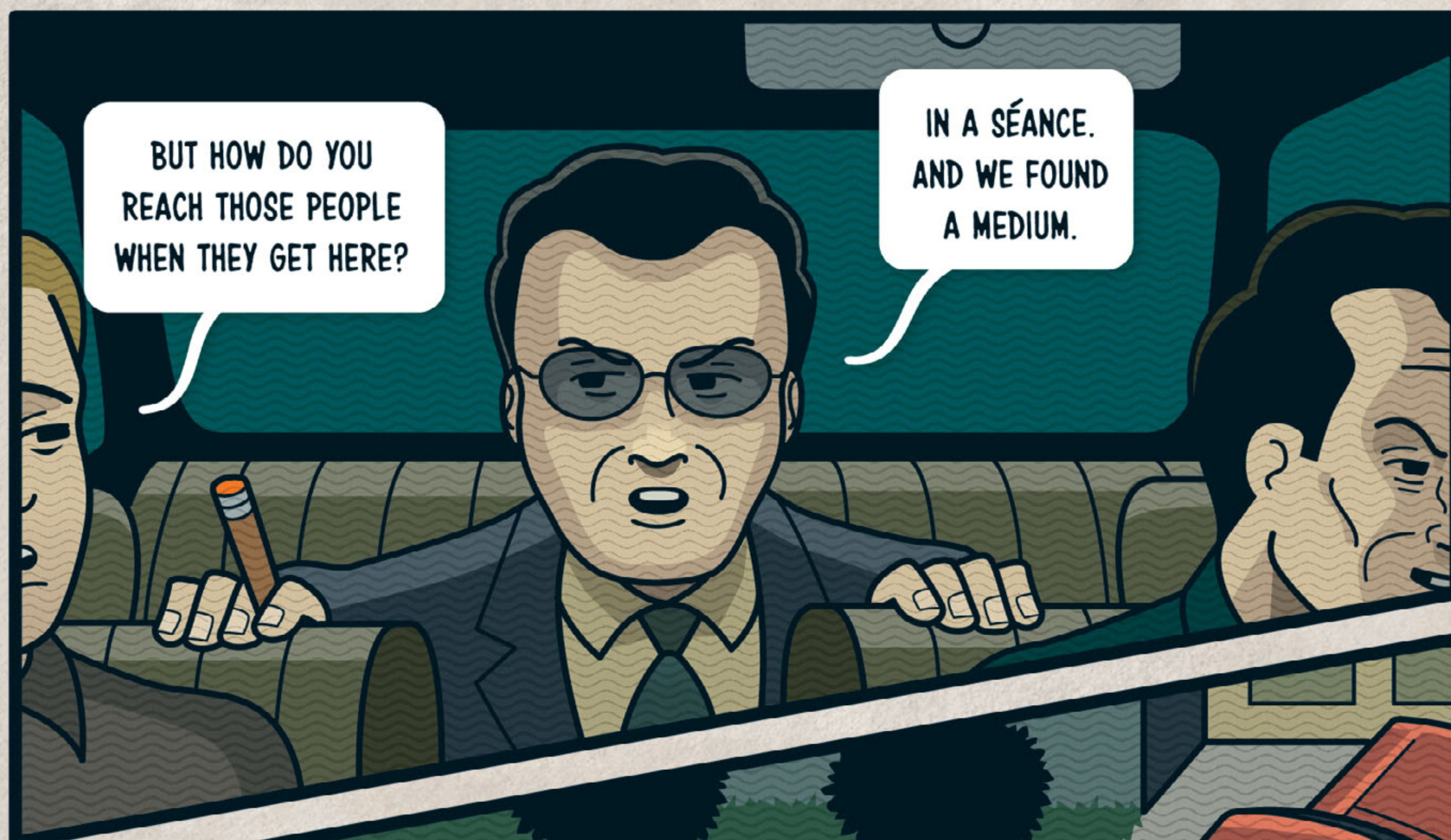
RAYMOND HAD SEVERAL NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES BEFORE HE DIED FOR GOOD.



YEAH, ONE TIME I SAW MY MOM AND SISTER ANGELA, BOTH OF WHOM ARE DEAD...AND THEY REMEMBERED IT WHEN I GOT HERE FOR GOOD. YOU SEE...DEATH IS A TWO-WAY STREET.



RAYMOND WAS ONTO SOMETHING. IN A NEAR-DEATH STATE, A LIVING PERSON CAN CROSS OVER AND THEN GO BACK IF THEY'RE REVIVED IN TIME.





EDDIE
RAPPED
LIGHTLY ON
THE DOOR.



SHE STARED
AT JIM.

HE WASN'T
HERE
LAST TIME.



I TOLD YOU,
NOBODY COMES
THAT I HAVEN'T
VETTED.



SURE, SURE, LINDA. WE KNEW
JIM FROM BEFORE. I VOUCH
FOR HIM. HE'S OKAY.



WELL, YOU KNOW
HOW DANGEROUS
THIS IS. IF WE'RE
CAUGHT DOING
A SÉANCE...

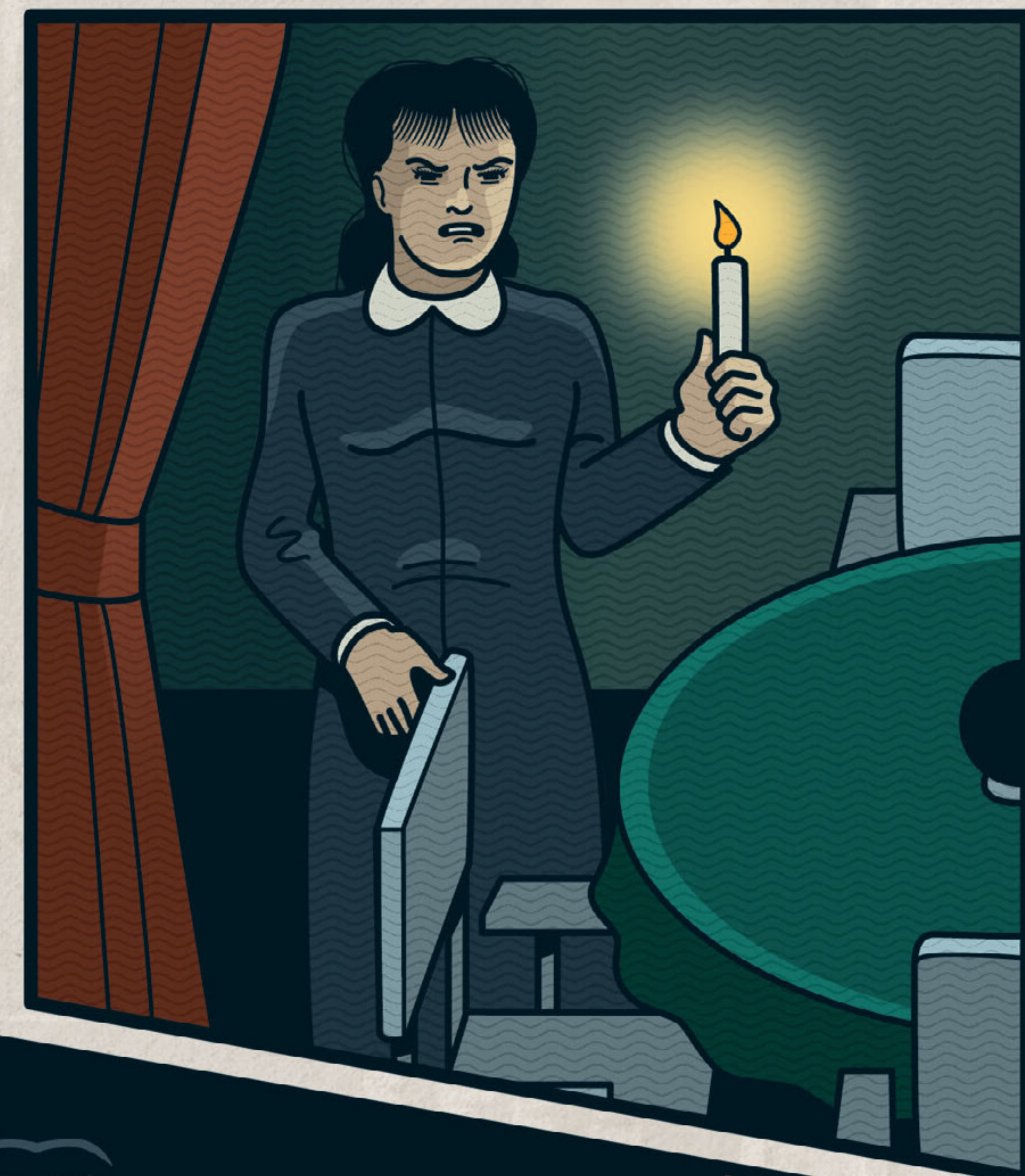
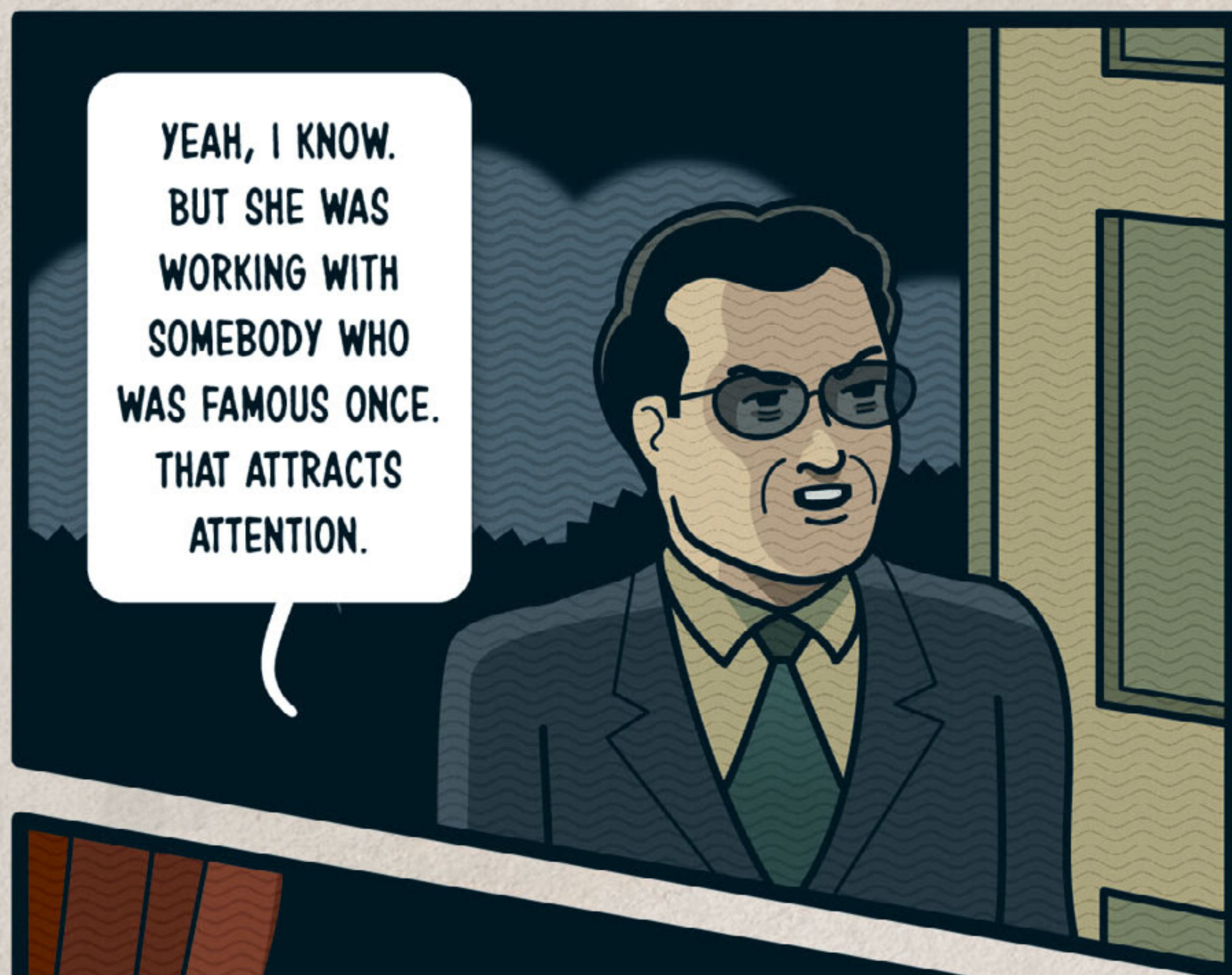


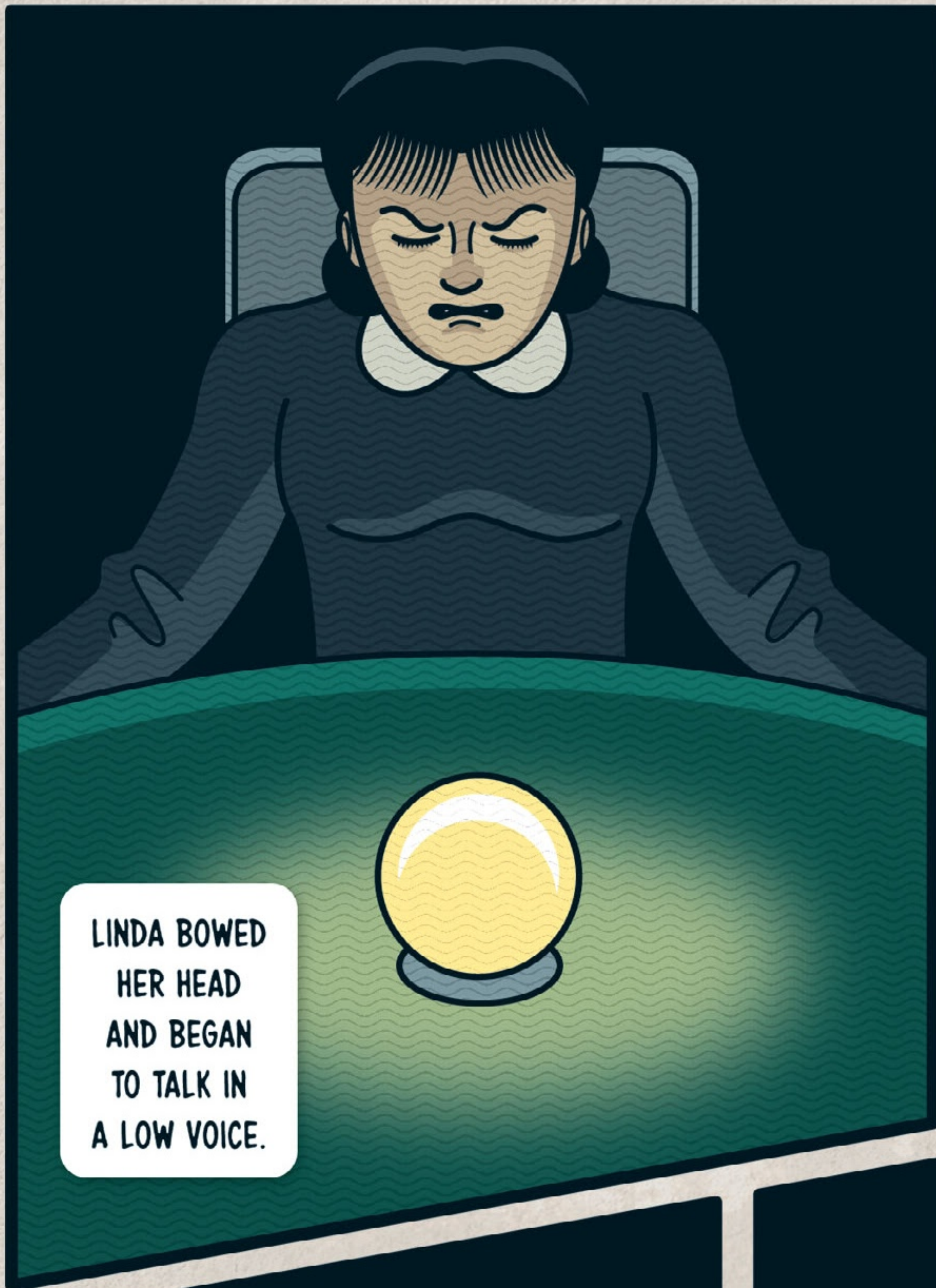
THIS IS IMPORTANT.
REAL IMPORTANT.

IT BETTER BE.
THEY GOT CARLA
LAST WEEK.



SHE USHERED
THEM INTO
THE DARK
HOUSE.





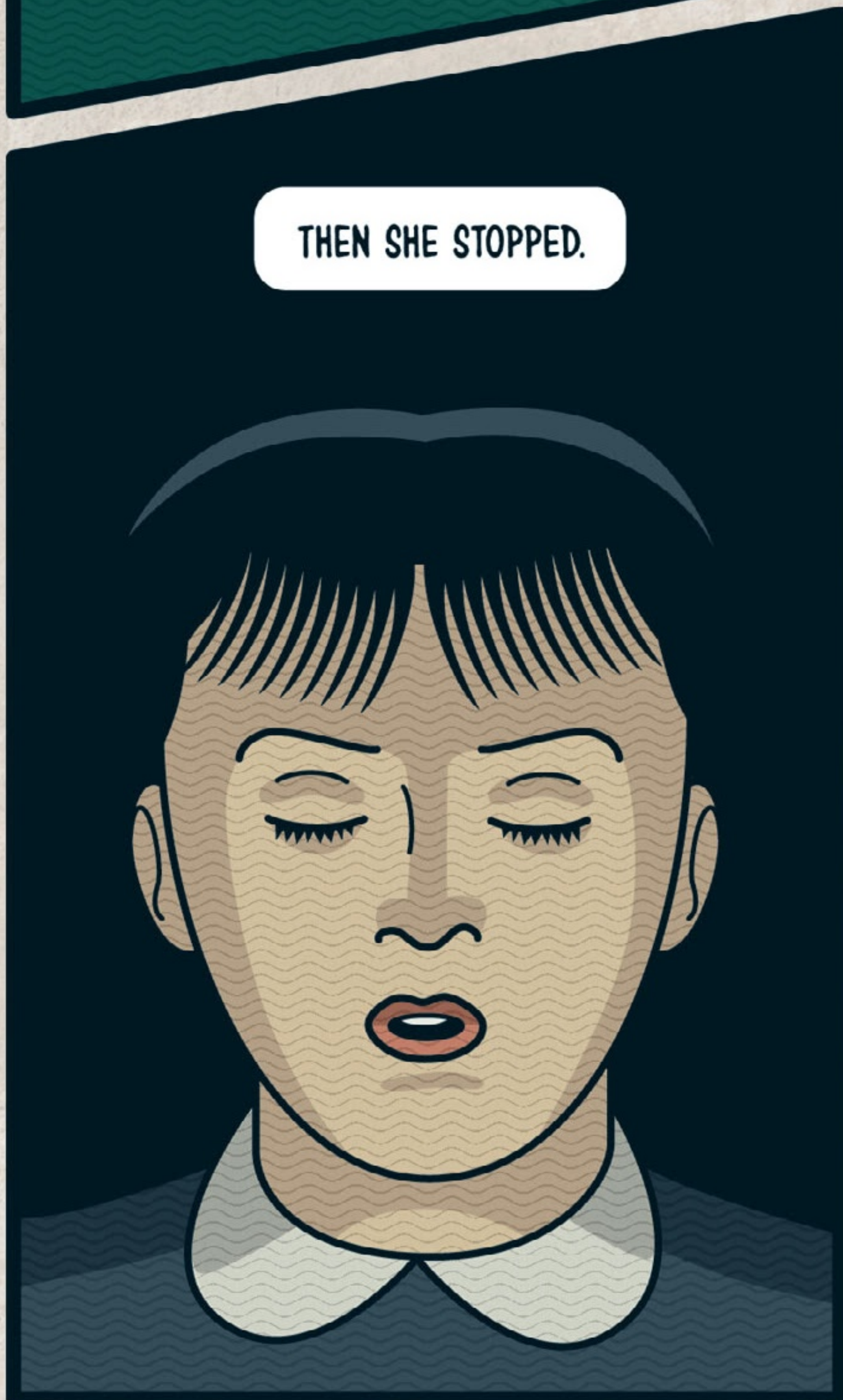
LINDA BOWED
HER HEAD
AND BEGAN
TO TALK IN
A LOW VOICE.



IT SOUNDED
TO JIM
LIKE SHE
WAS SPEAKING
IN TONGUES.



HER VOICE
ROSE AND
FELL IN A
SOOTHING
RHYTHM.



THEN SHE STOPPED.



WHO'S THERE?
CAN YOU
HEAR ME?

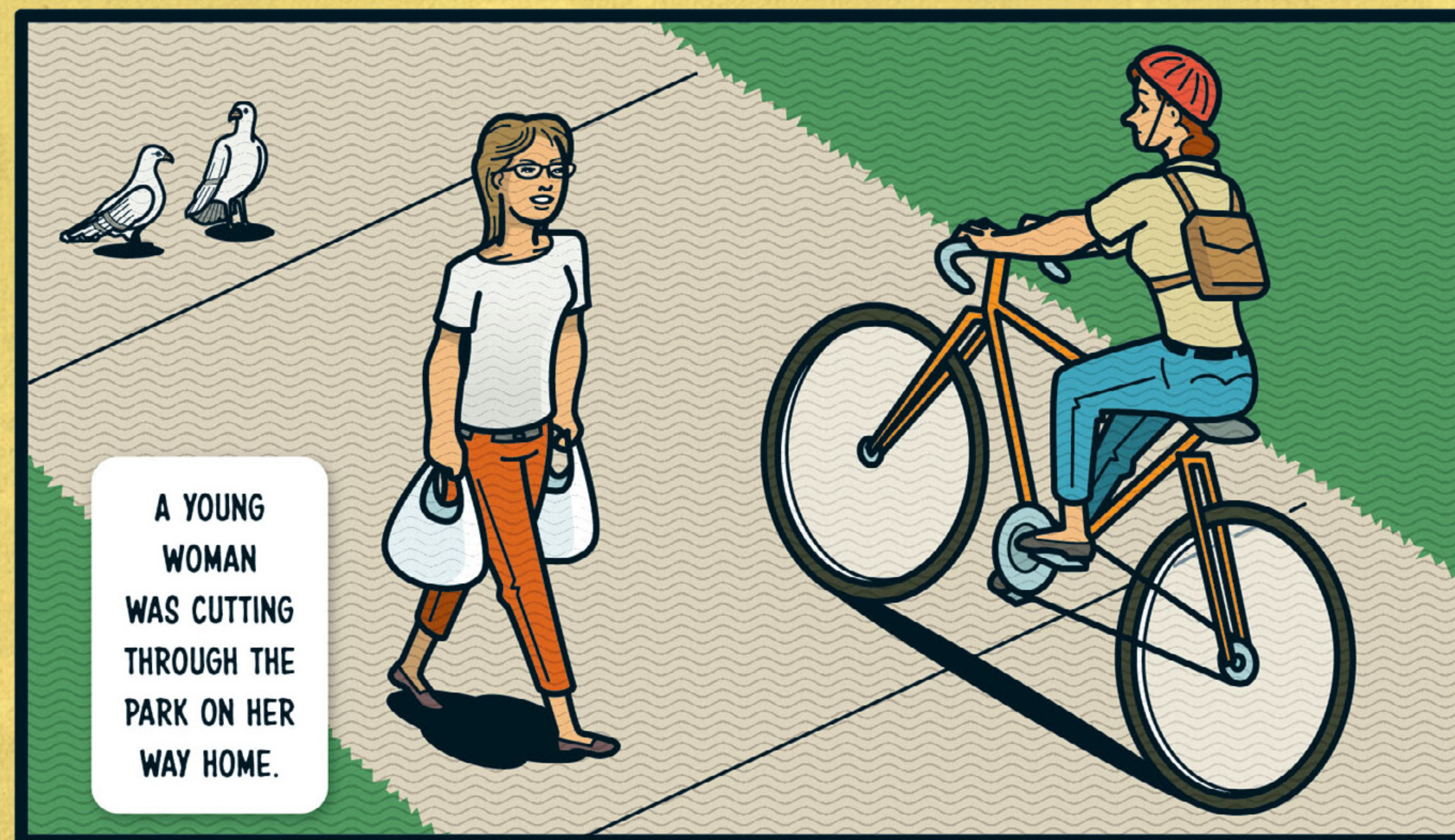


IS HE
THE ONE?

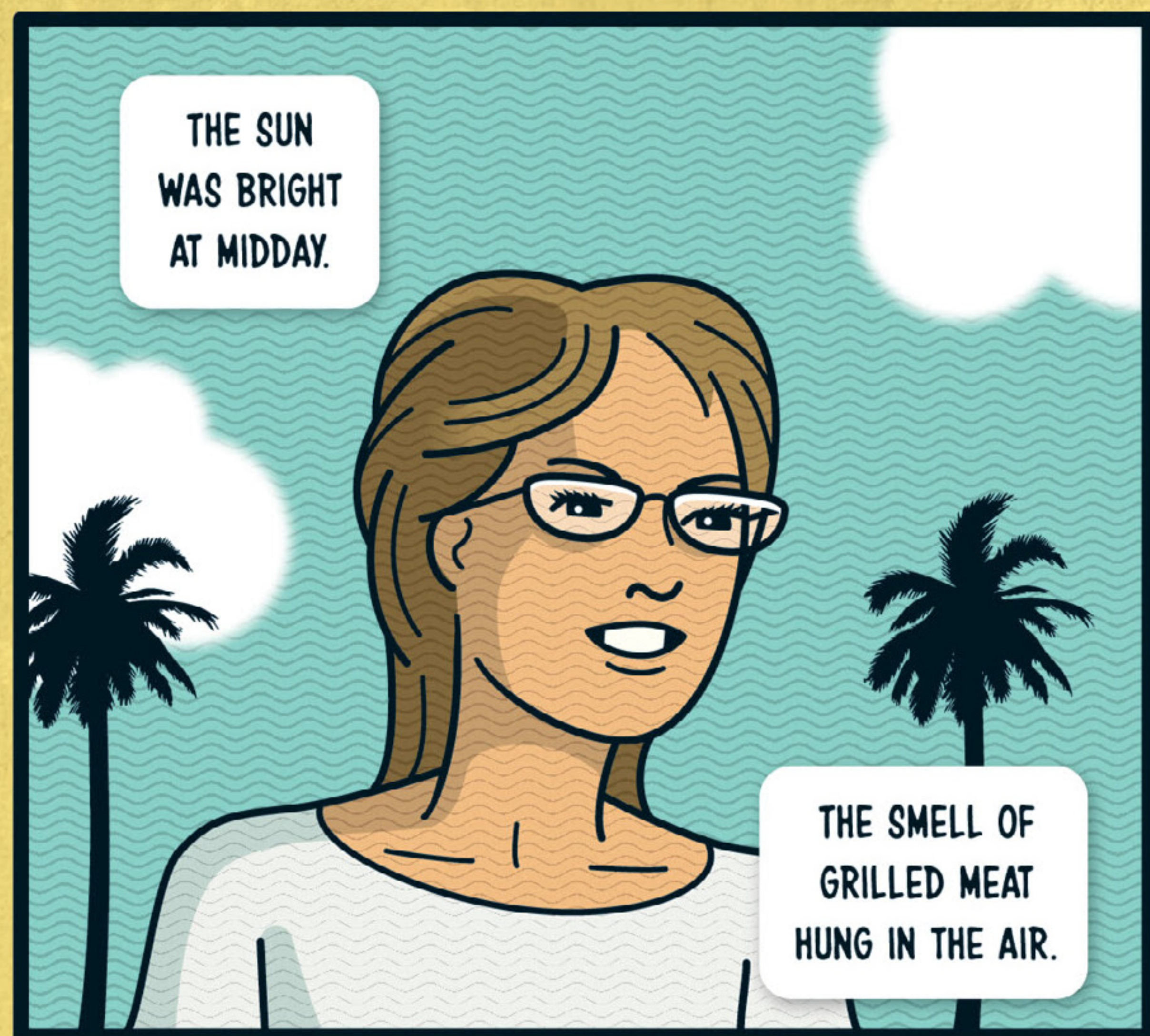


JIM COULD FEEL
SOMETHING LIKE
A STATIC CHARGE.

THE ROOM
WENT DARK.

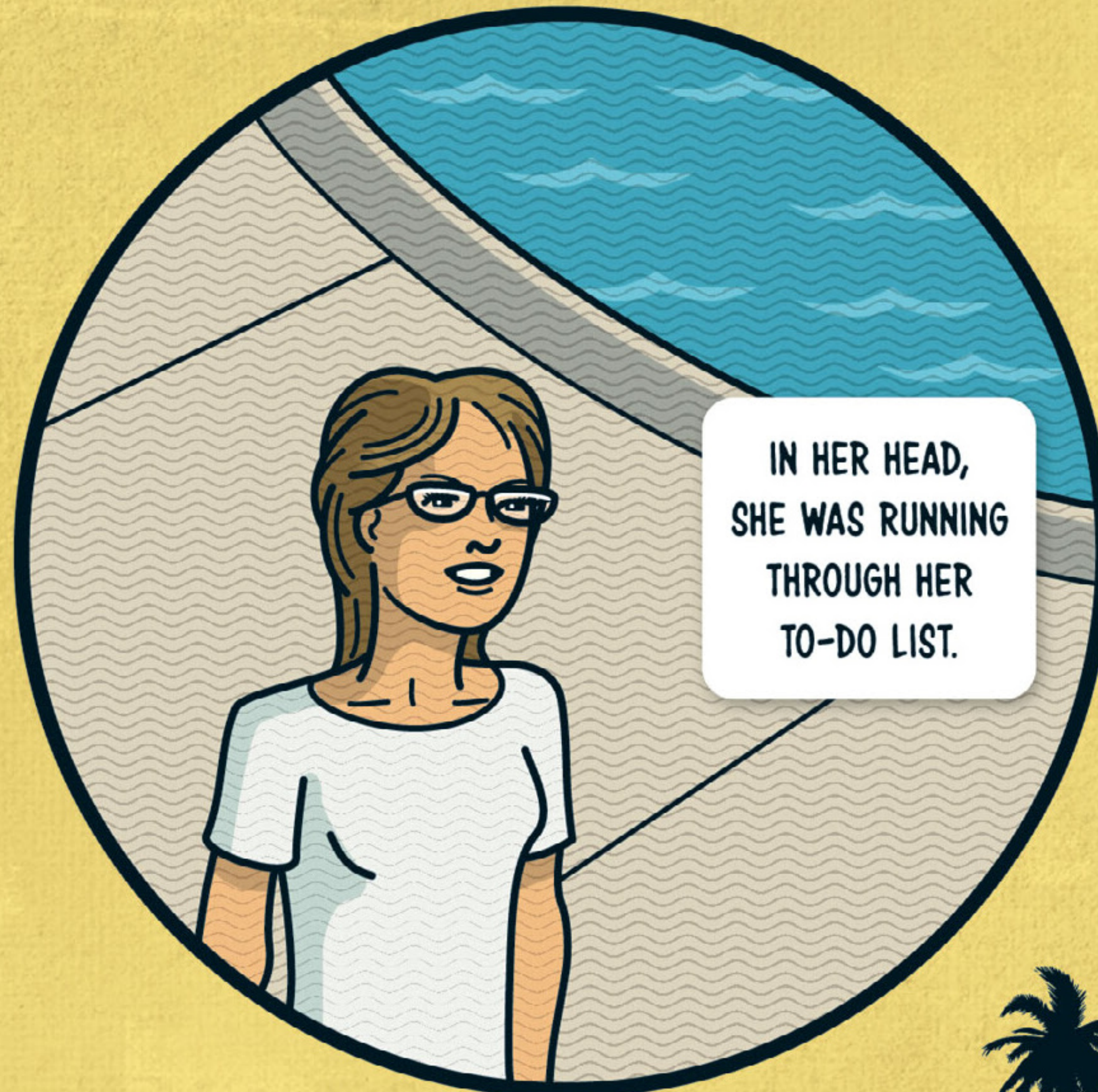


A YOUNG WOMAN WAS CUTTING THROUGH THE PARK ON HER WAY HOME.

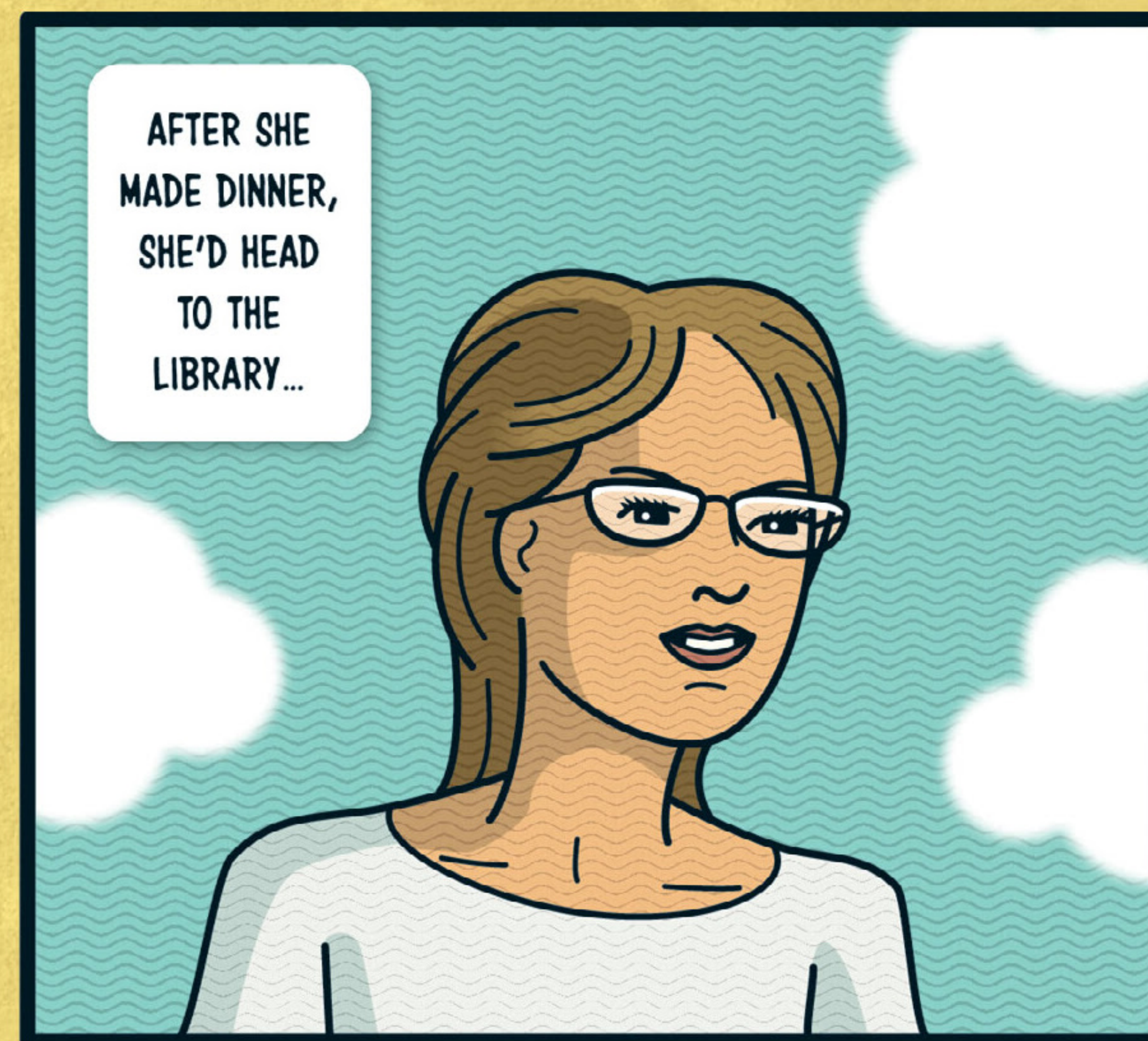


THE SUN WAS BRIGHT AT MIDDAY.

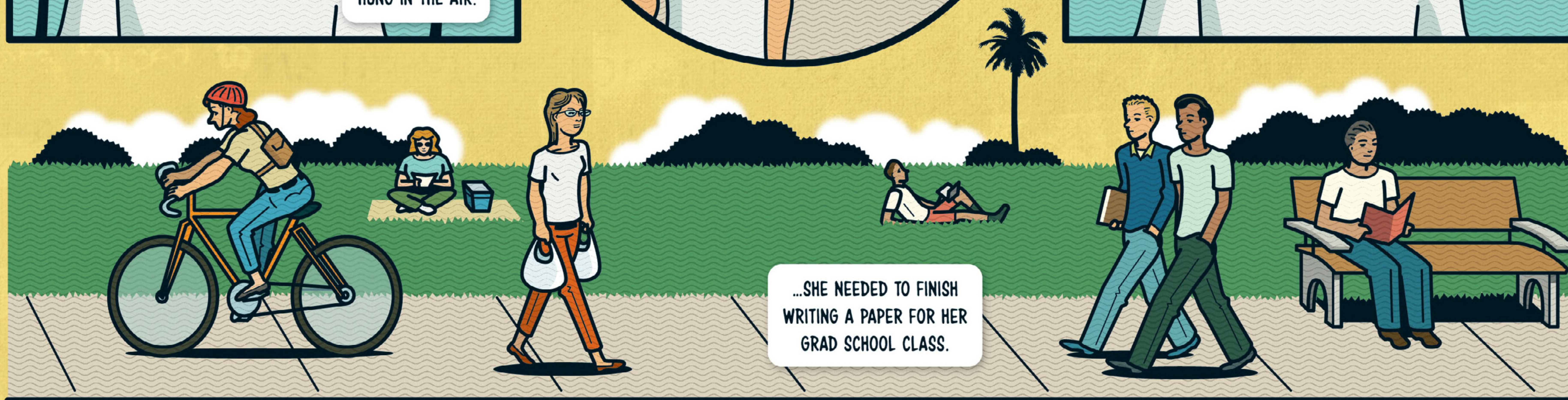
THE SMELL OF GRILLED MEAT HUNG IN THE AIR.



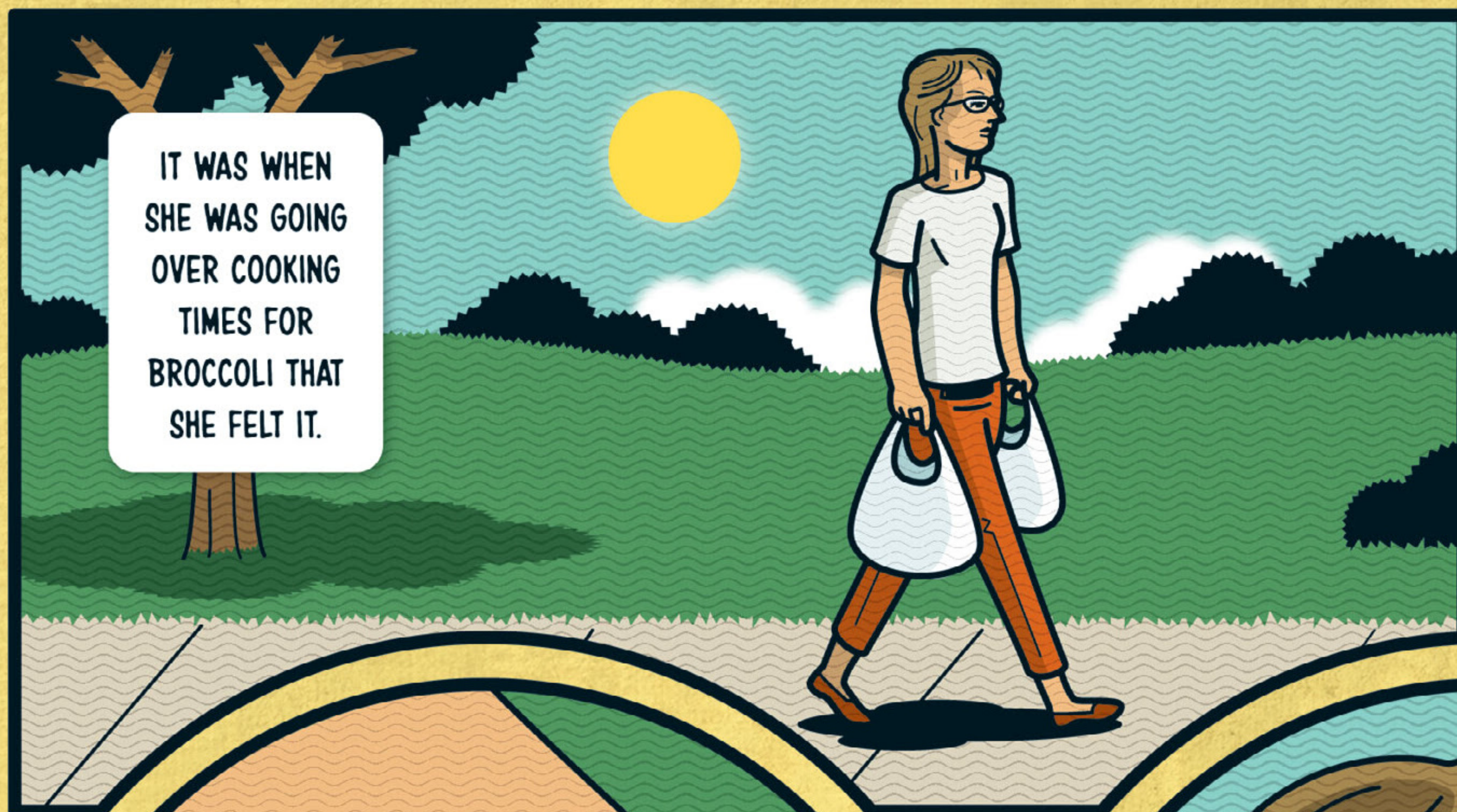
IN HER HEAD, SHE WAS RUNNING THROUGH HER TO-DO LIST.



AFTER SHE MADE DINNER, SHE'D HEAD TO THE LIBRARY...



...SHE NEEDED TO FINISH WRITING A PAPER FOR HER GRAD SCHOOL CLASS.



IT WAS WHEN SHE WAS GOING OVER COOKING TIMES FOR BROCCOLI THAT SHE FELT IT.



AN ITCHING, BURNING PAIN ON HER RIGHT FOREARM.



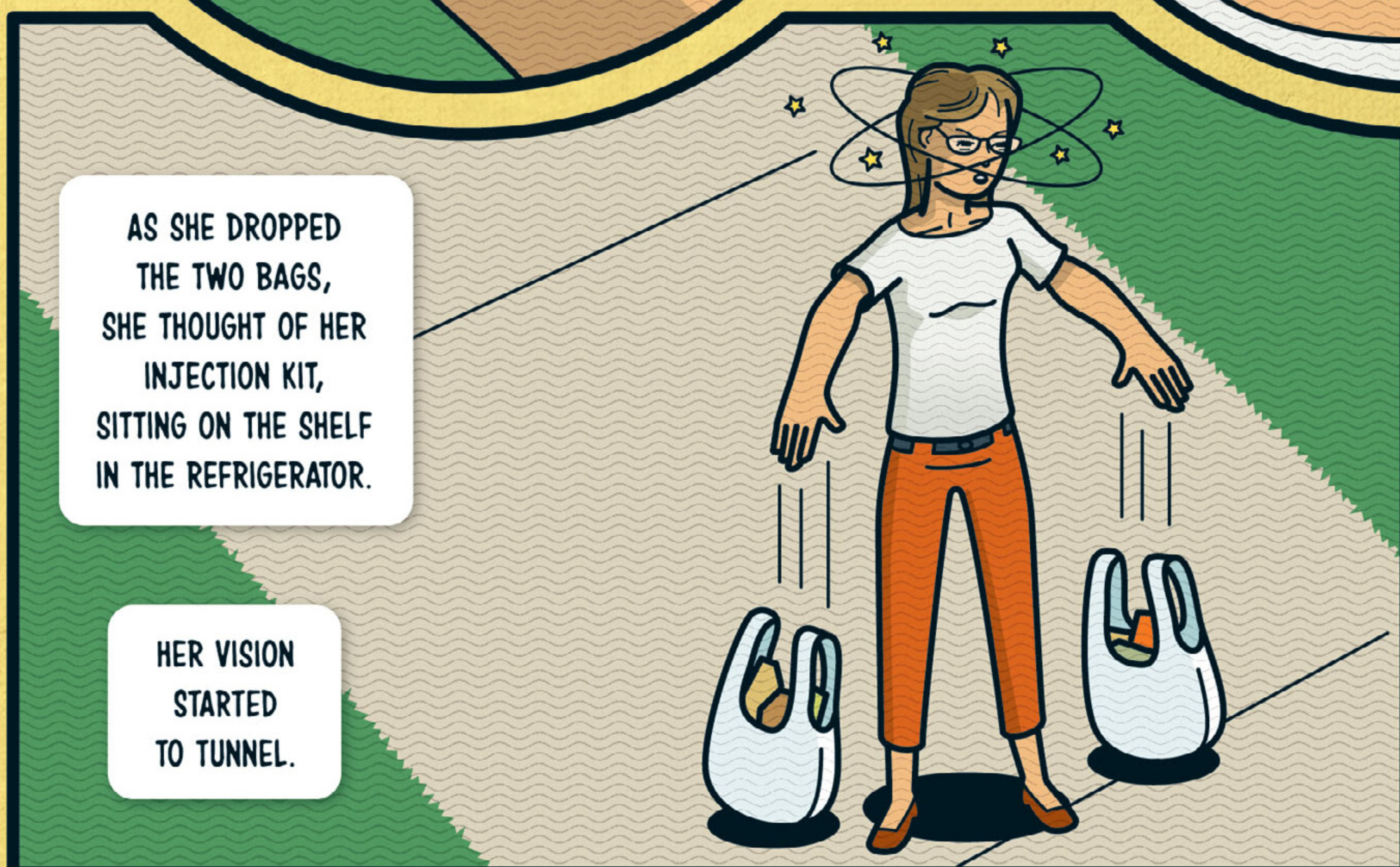
A BEE. ITS STINGER STUCK IN HER SKIN.



NOT MORE THAN A MINUTE LATER, SHE BEGAN TO FEEL A RASP IN HER THROAT.



HER HEAD TILTED SLIGHTLY, AS IF SHE WERE LISTENING TO SOMETHING. HER PACE SLOWED UNTIL SHE WAS STANDING STILL.



AS SHE DROPPED THE TWO BAGS, SHE THOUGHT OF HER INJECTION KIT, SITTING ON THE SHELF IN THE REFRIGERATOR.

HER VISION STARTED TO TUNNEL.



HER CHEST HEAVED AS HER LUNGS TRIED TO PULL IN AIR.

HER GLASSES SLIPPED OFF HER WET NOSE, AND SHE LOST HER BALANCE TRYING TO GRAB THEM.

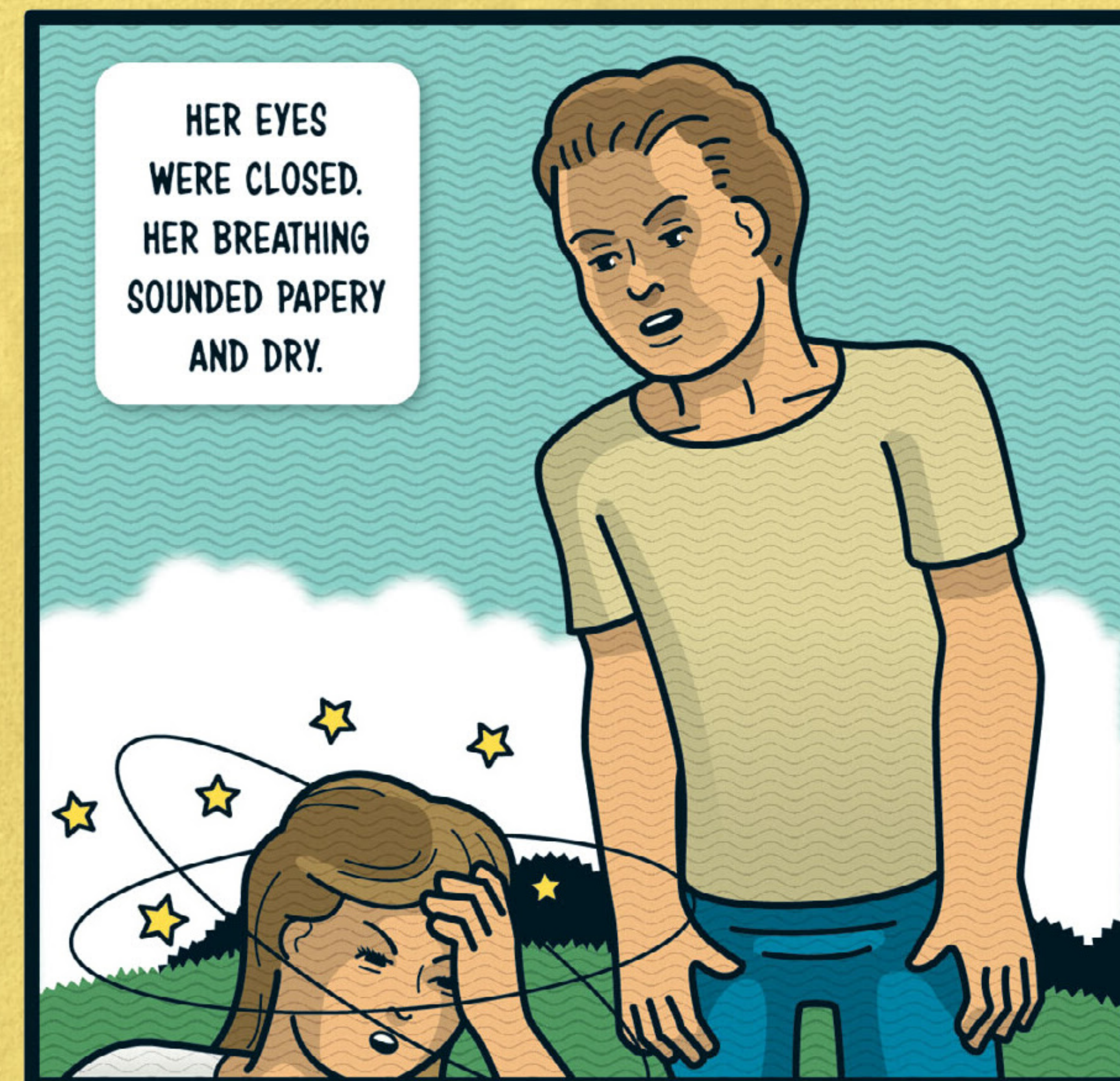


SHE STARTED FALLING AND NARROWLY MISSED A SKATEBOARDER WEAVING BY.



HE LOOKED STARTLED AS SHE SLUMPED DOWN ONTO THE SIDEWALK. HE JUMPED OFF HIS BOARD AND RAN OVER TO HER.

HEY! CALL 911. I THINK THIS GIRL IS HAVING AN ASTHMA ATTACK!



HER EYES WERE CLOSED. HER BREATHING SOUNDED PAPERY AND DRY.



YES. YES. THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY.

DID YOU CALL 911?

THE PEOPLE WATCHED AS AN AMBULANCE PULLED SLOWLY INTO THE PARK.

A CYCLIST TRIED TO OFFER BOTTLED WATER. THE SKATEBOARDER WAVED HIM AWAY. "NO FLUIDS. SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS."

PALM FRONDS
SWAYED IN THE
AFTERNOON
BREEZE.

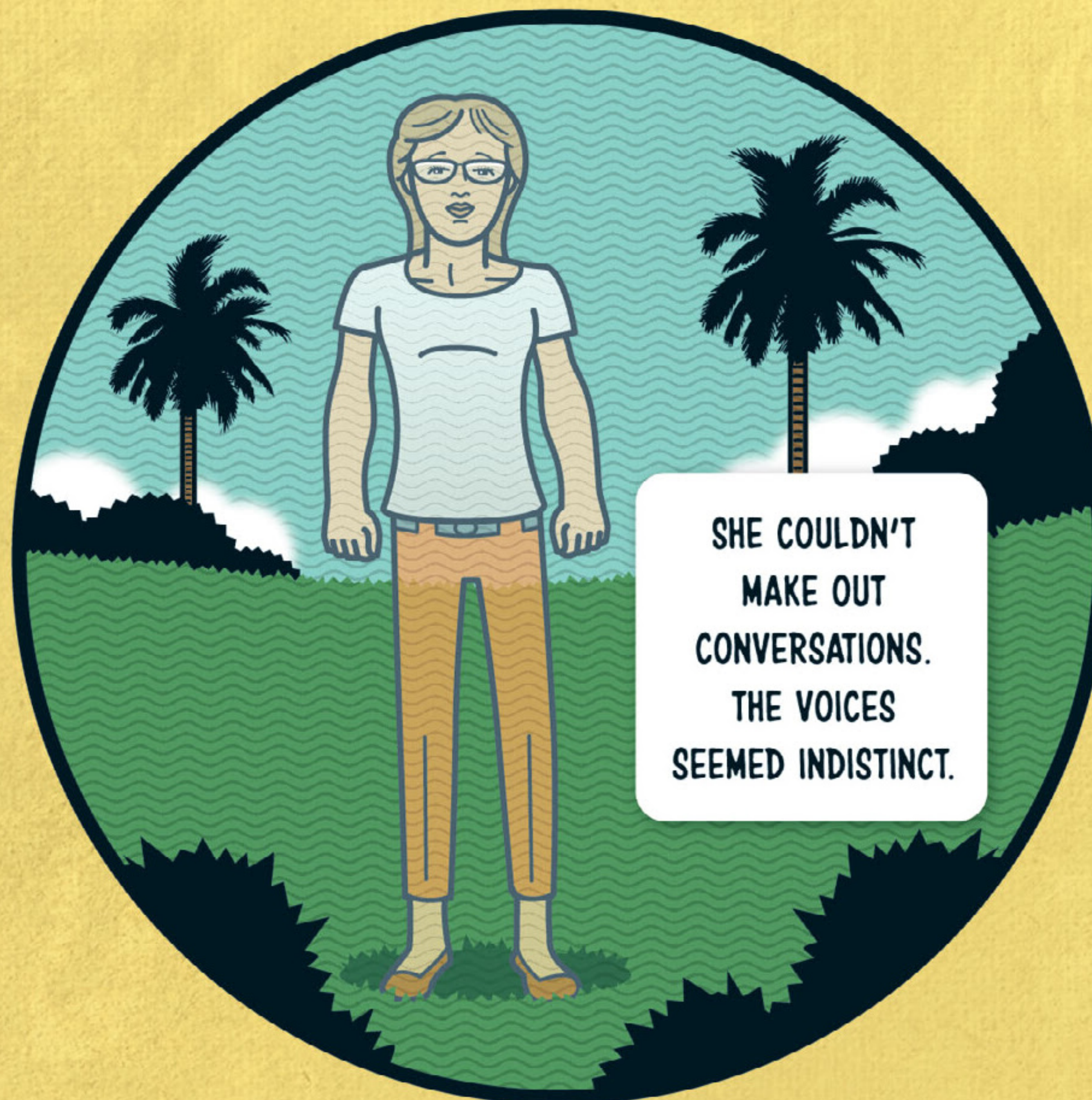
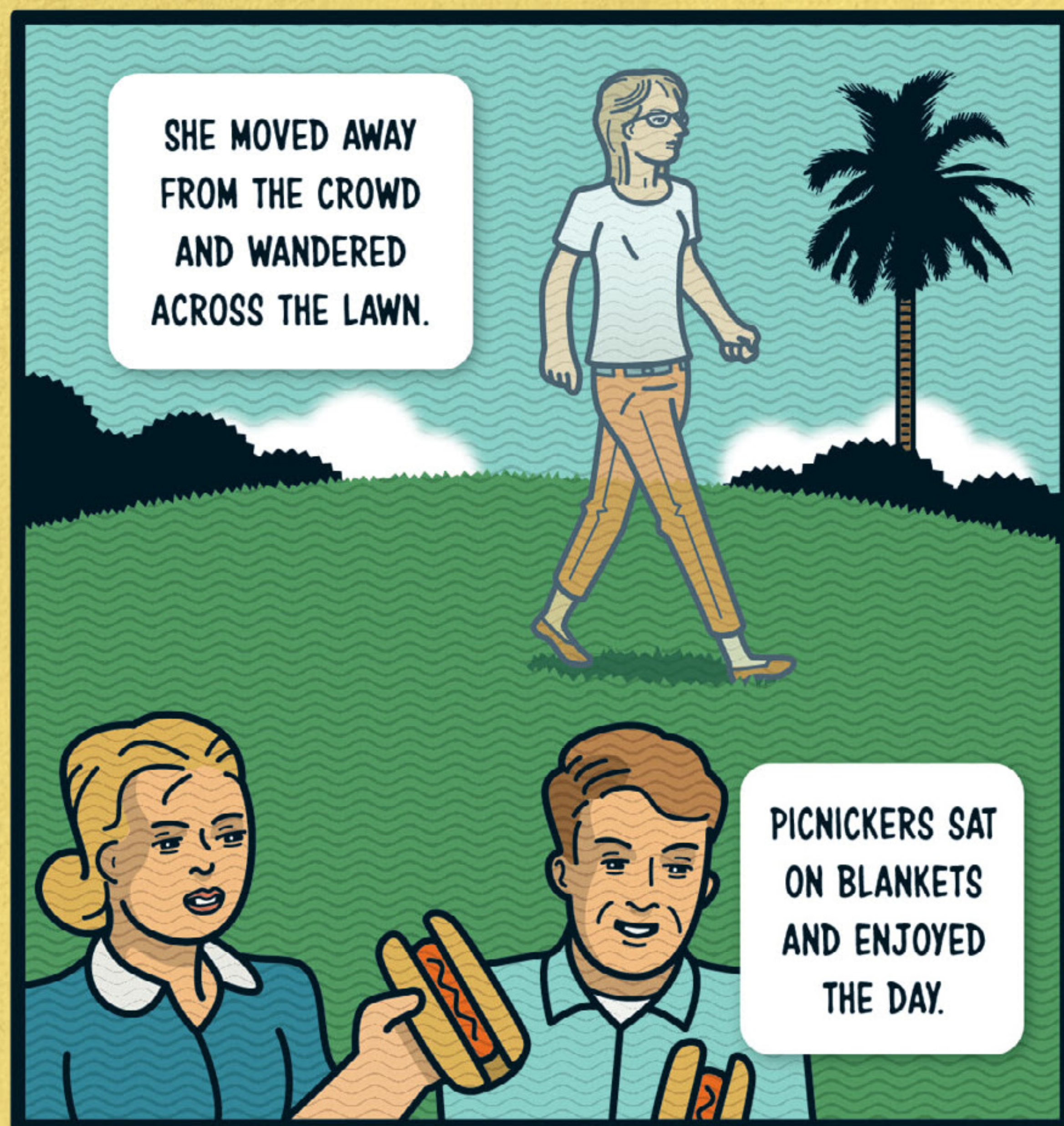
THE SUN WAS
A YELLOW EGG
IN THE SKY...

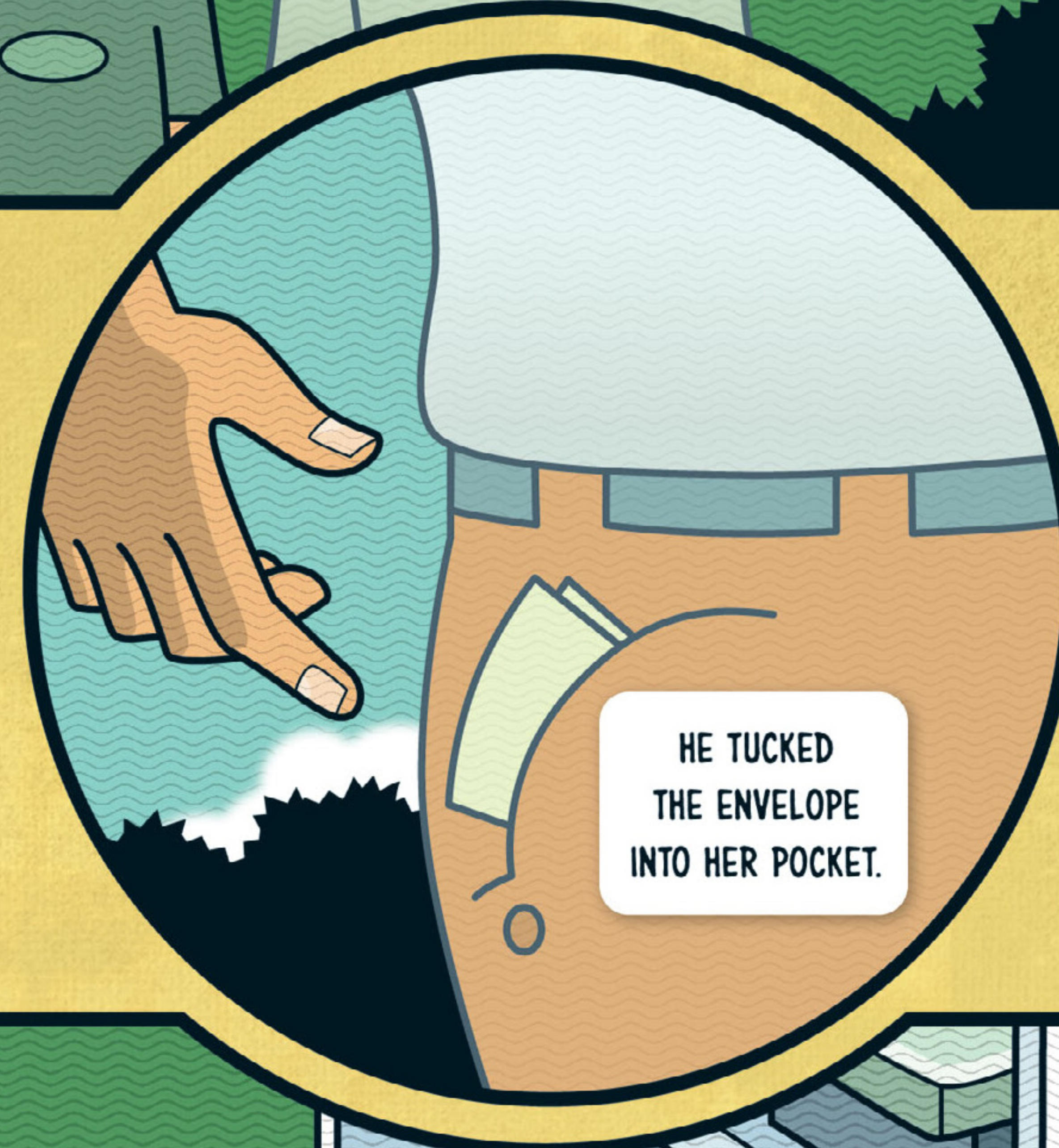
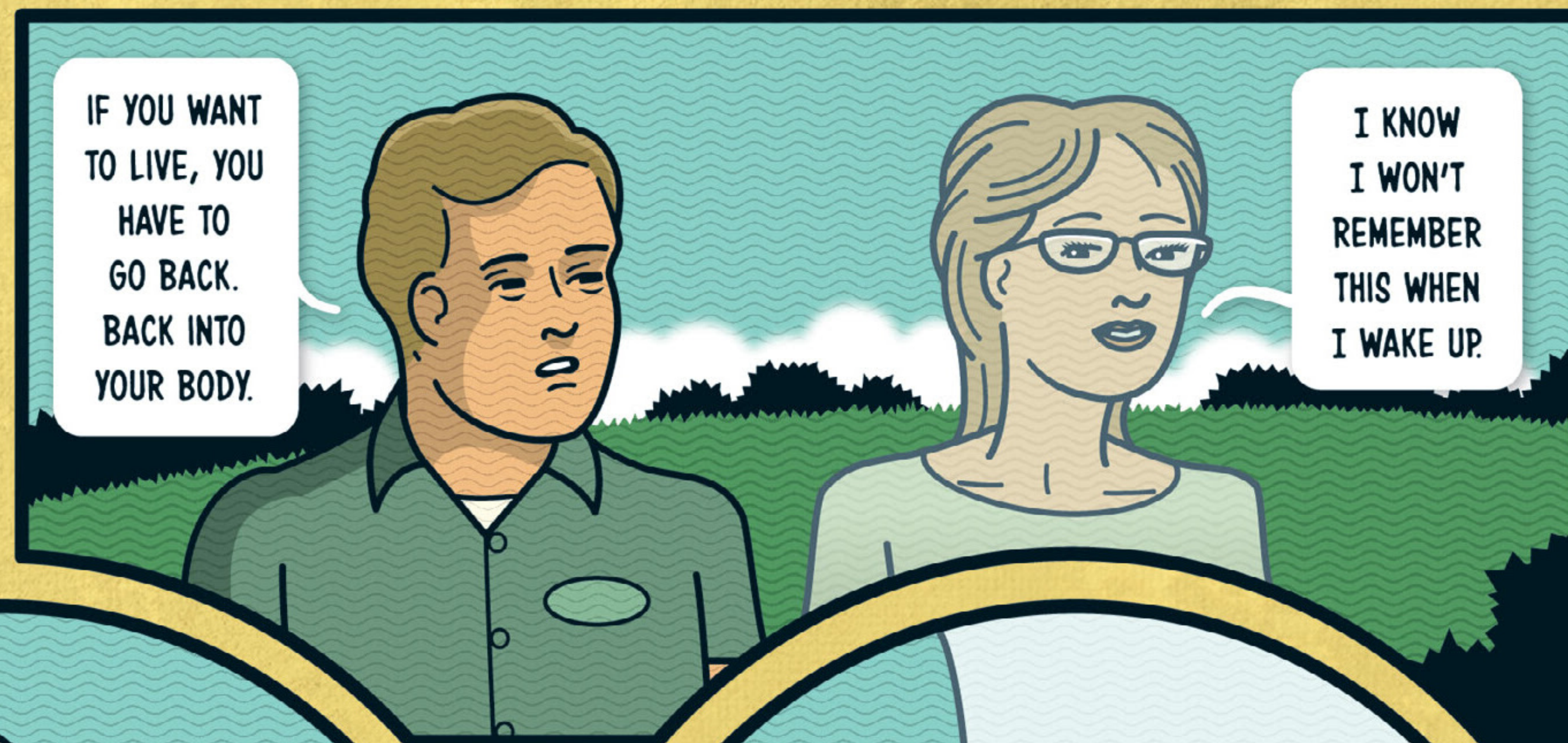
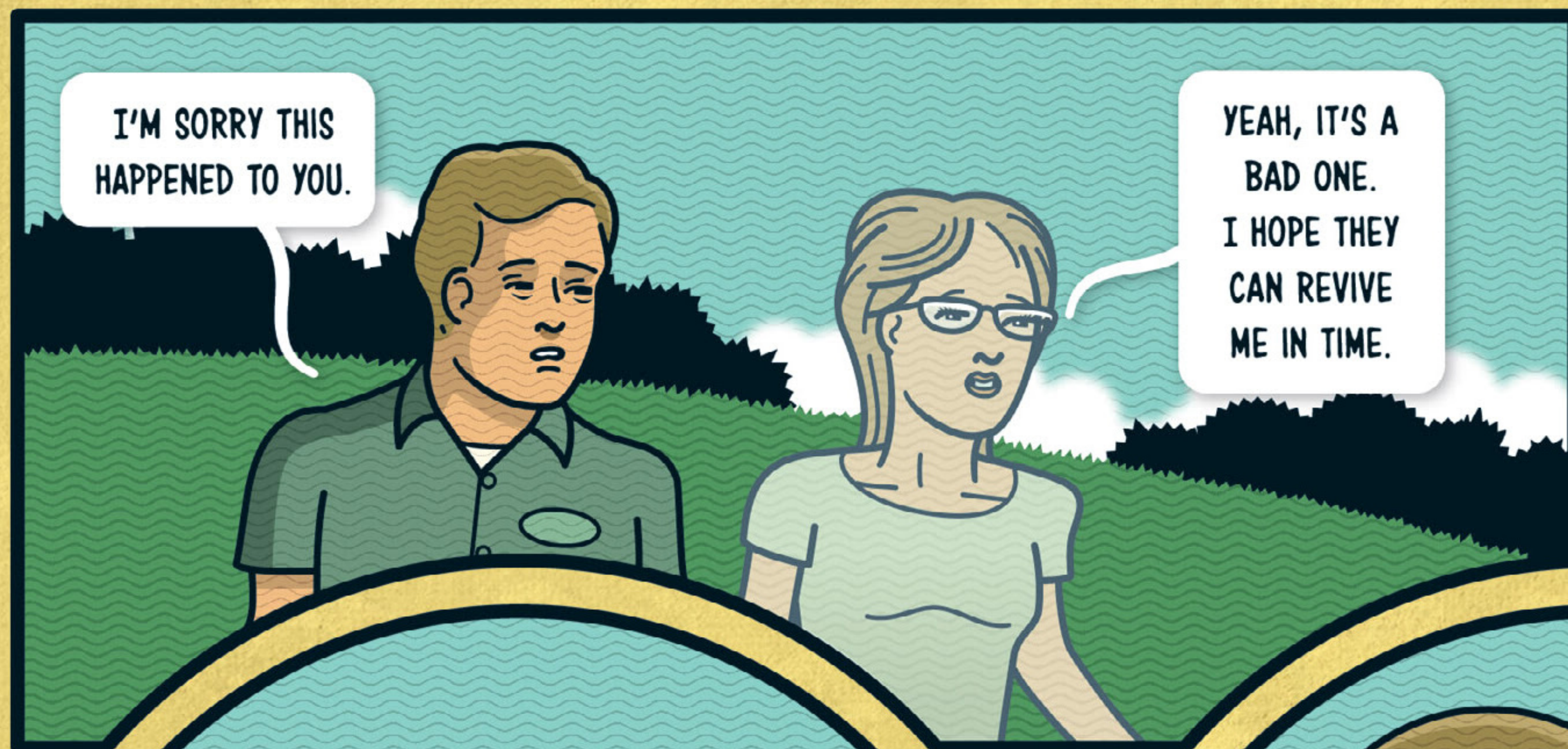
...AND THE
GIRL WAS
DYING.

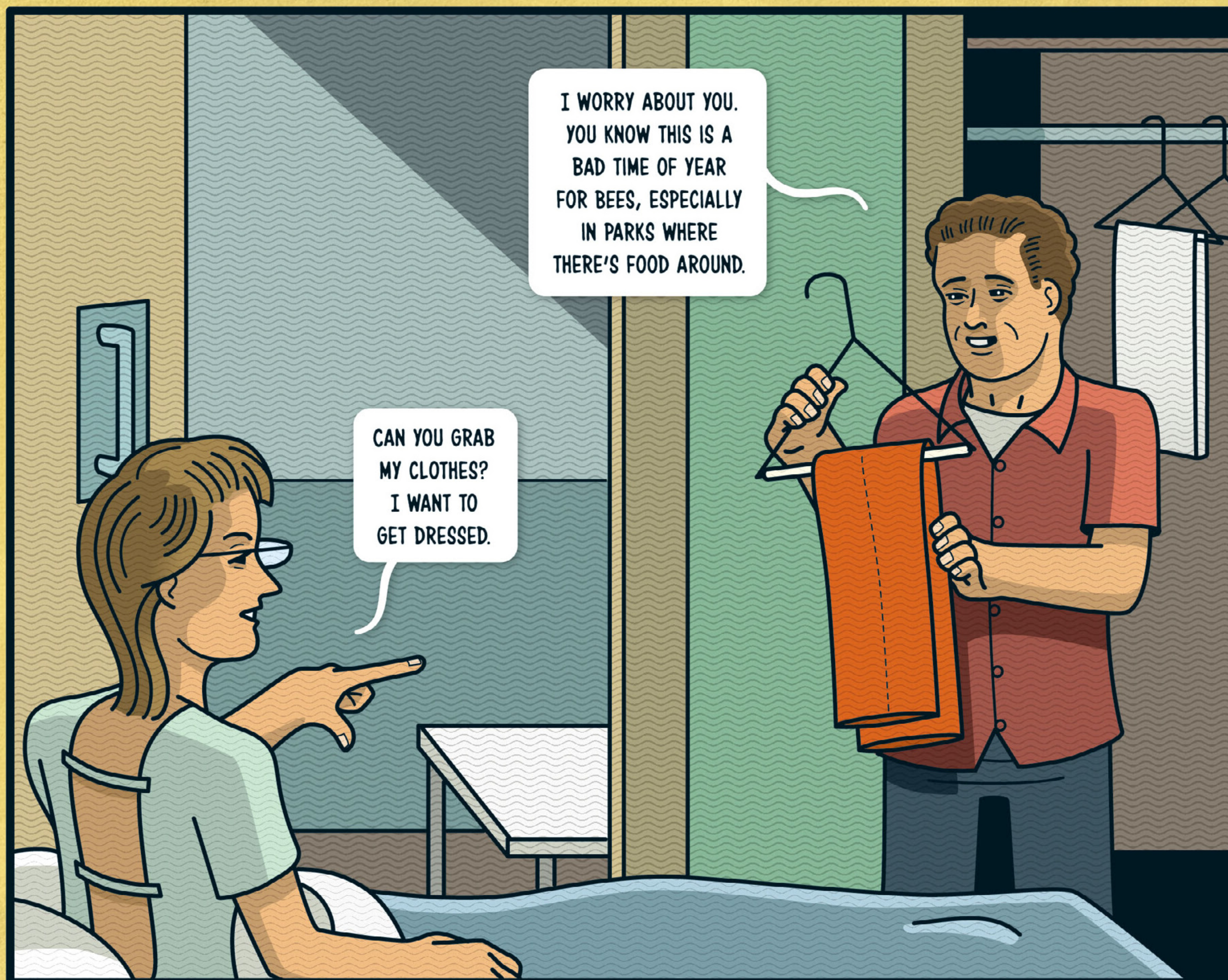
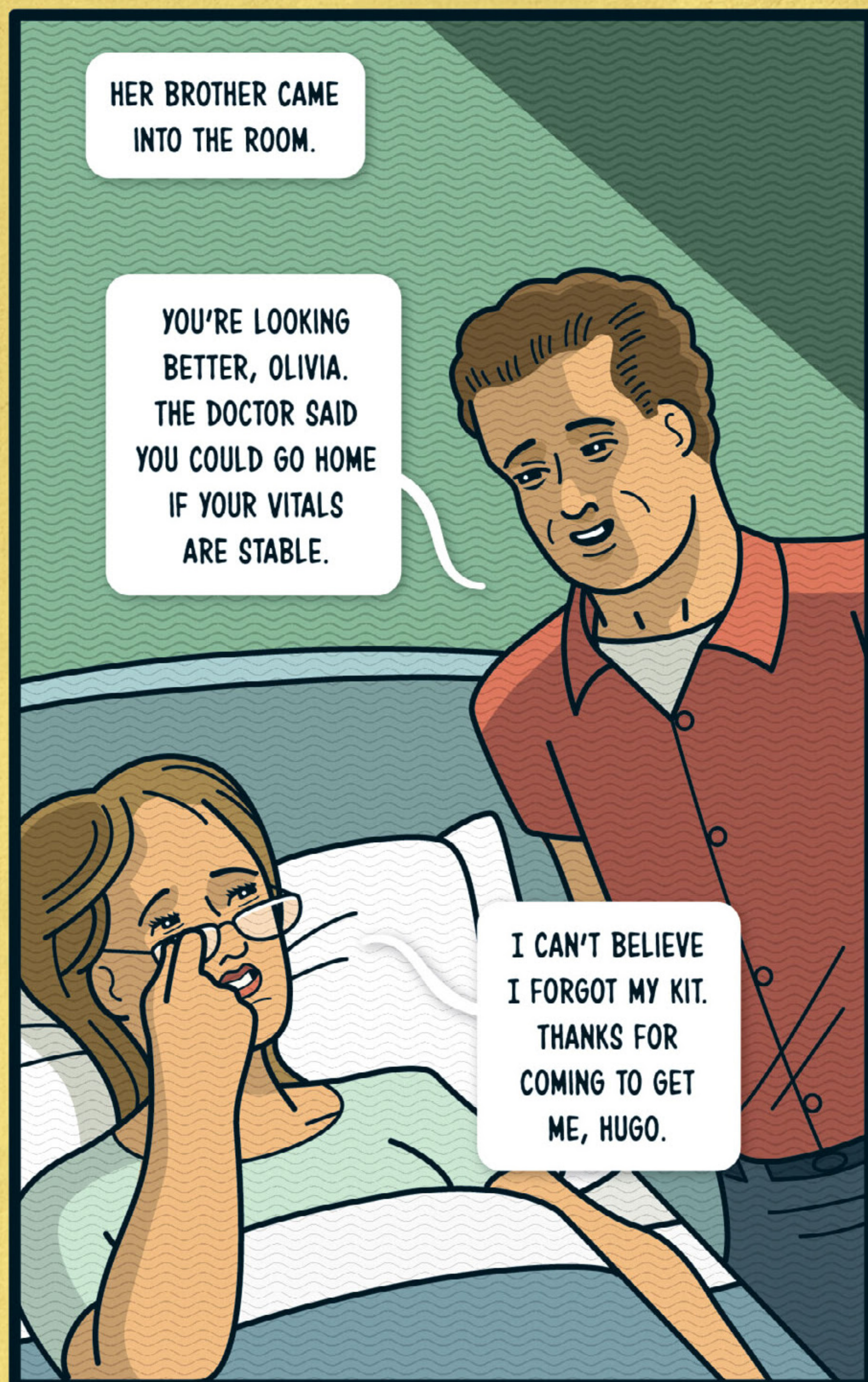
SHE GOT UP AND
LOOKED AT THE
PEOPLE STANDING
AROUND HER BODY
ON THE SIDEWALK.

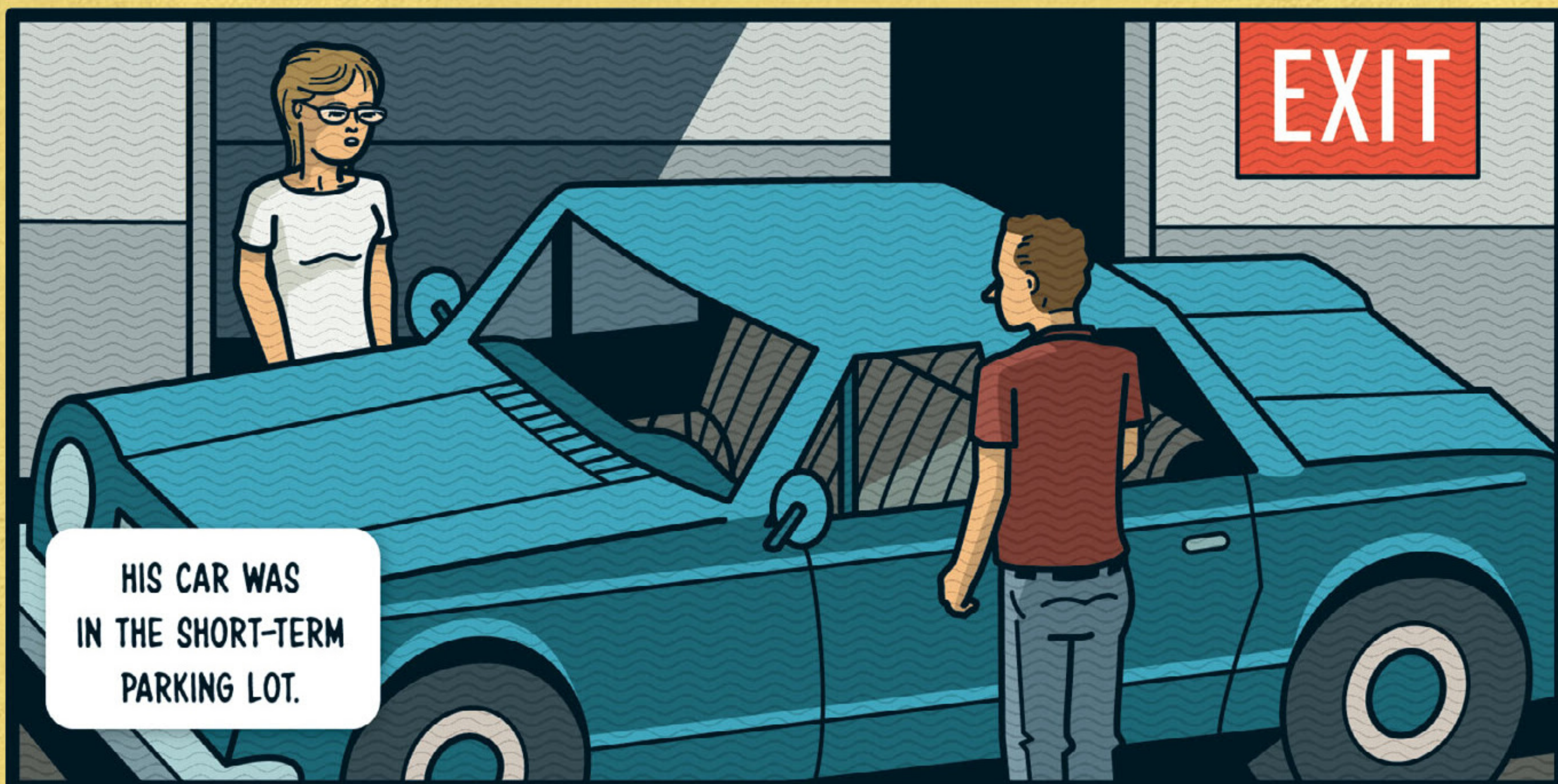
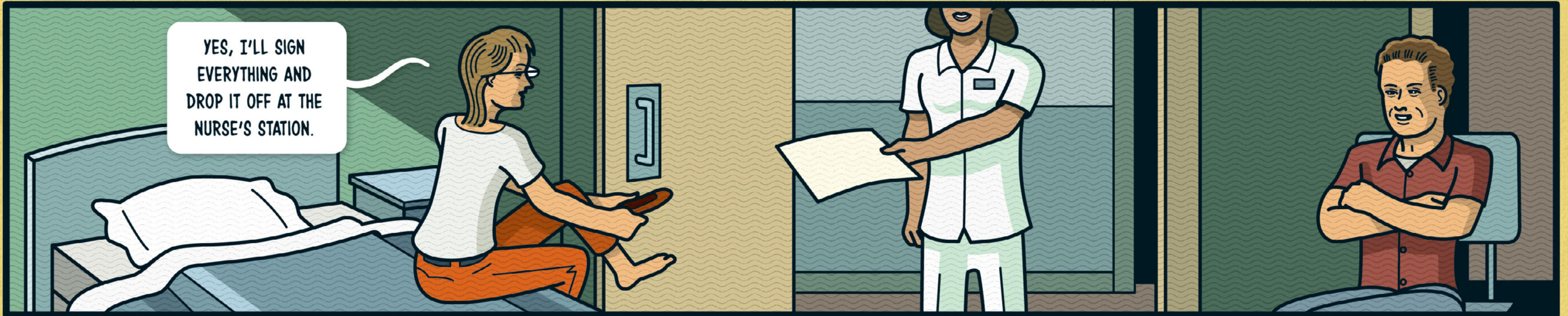
THE EMTS OPENED
THE BACK DOOR OF
THEIR AMBULANCE
AND TROTTED OVER
WITH A KIT BAG.

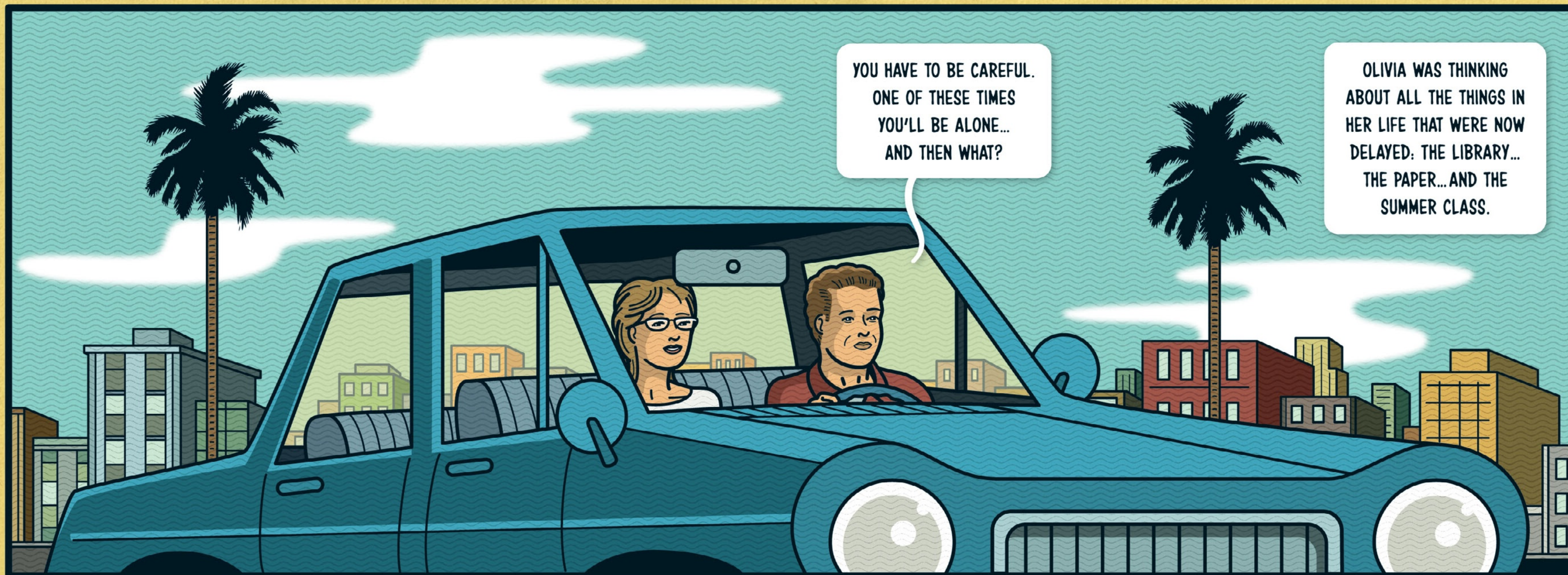
THEIR RADIO
CRACKLED AS
A POLICE CAR
PULLED IN
BEHIND THEM.











YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.
ONE OF THESE TIMES
YOU'LL BE ALONE...
AND THEN WHAT?

OLIVIA WAS THINKING
ABOUT ALL THE THINGS IN
HER LIFE THAT WERE NOW
DELAYED: THE LIBRARY...
THE PAPER...AND THE
SUMMER CLASS.



YOU'RE RIGHT...



...I'LL BE
MORE CAREFUL.
FROM NOW ON.



HUGO ROLLED
HIS EYES.

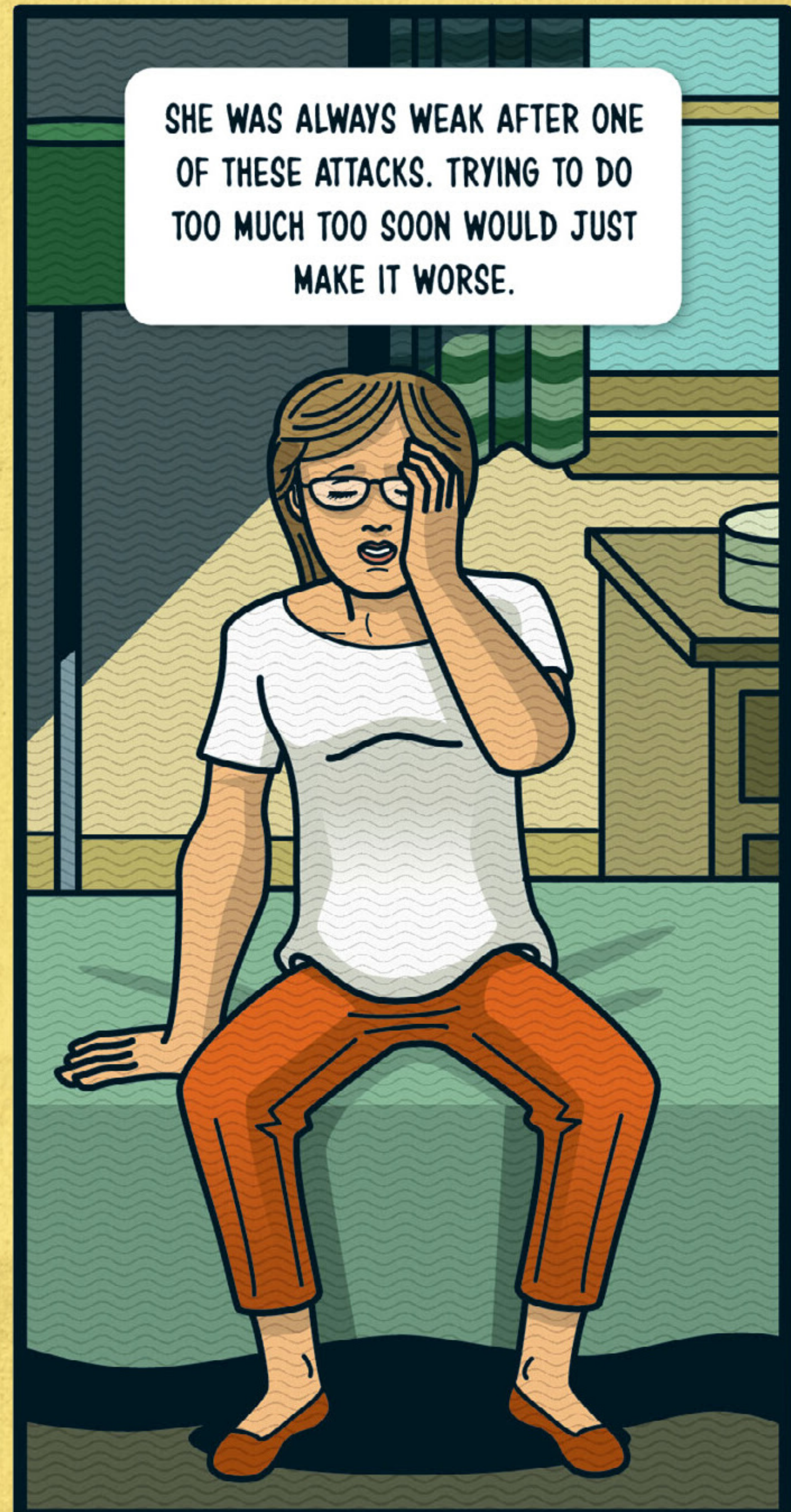


THEIR MOM WAS
IN THE KITCHEN
WHEN THEY
GOT HOME.

AFTER SHE RECOUNTED THE STORY
ONE MORE TIME, AND LISTENED
TO HER MOTHER'S WARNINGS,
SHE EXCUSED HERSELF AND
WENT TO HER ROOM.



HER WHOLE WEEK
WAS MESSED UP
NOW BECAUSE
OF A BEE STING.



SHE WAS ALWAYS WEAK AFTER ONE
OF THESE ATTACKS. TRYING TO DO
TOO MUCH TOO SOON WOULD JUST
MAKE IT WORSE.



SHE CHANGED HER CLOTHES
AND GATHERED UP A PILE OF
JEANS FOR THE LAUNDRY.

SHE FELT A LUMP
IN HER PANT
POCKET.

IF SHE LEFT A TISSUE IN HER POCKET, IT WOULD
DISSOLVE IN THE WASH AND SPREAD LITTLE
BITS OF PAPER OVER EVERYTHING.

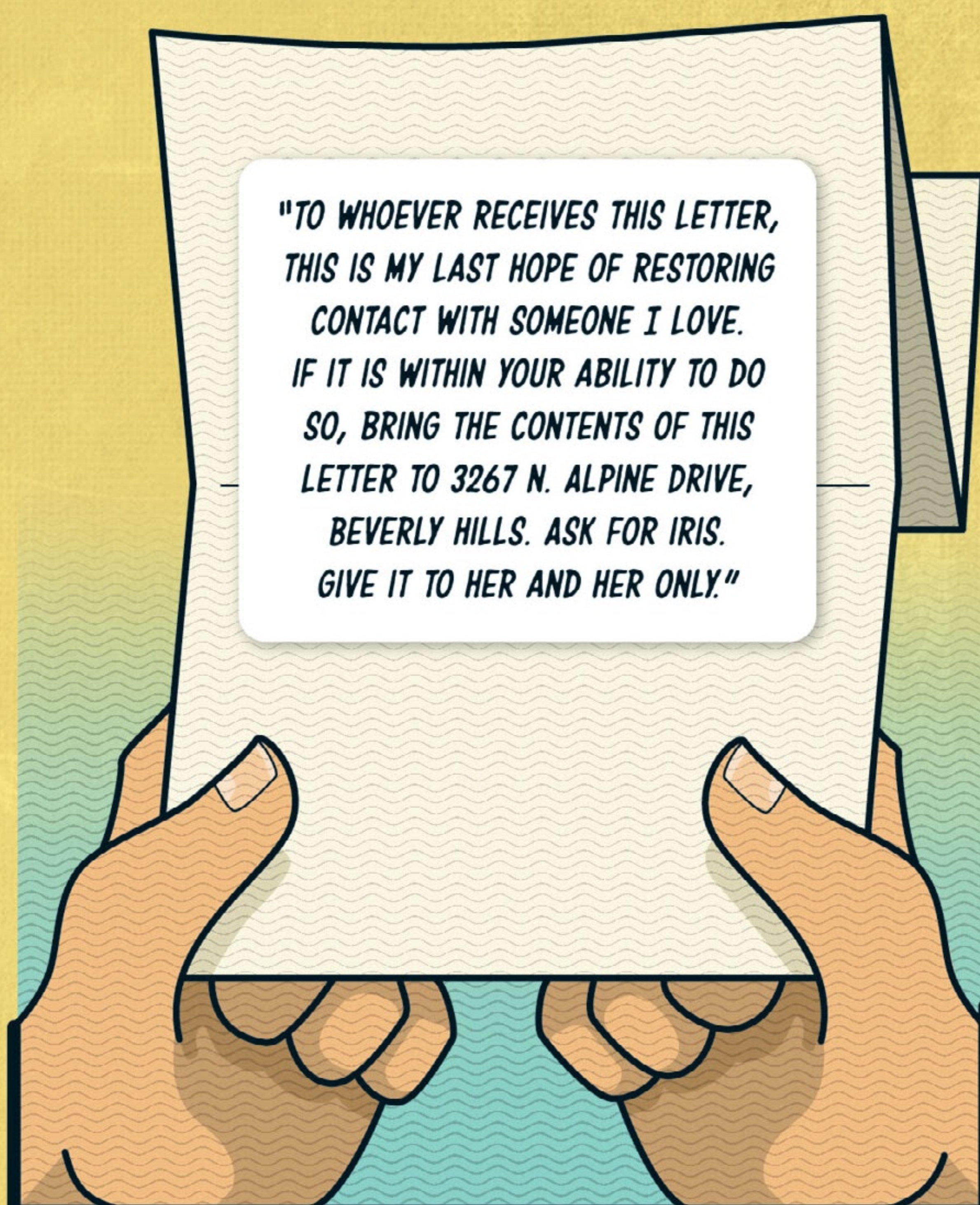
INSTEAD, SHE
PULLED OUT
A FOLDED
ENVELOPE.



IT WAS MADE OF HEAVY, CREAM-COLORED PAPER. SHE FLIPPED IT OVER AND TORE IT OPEN.



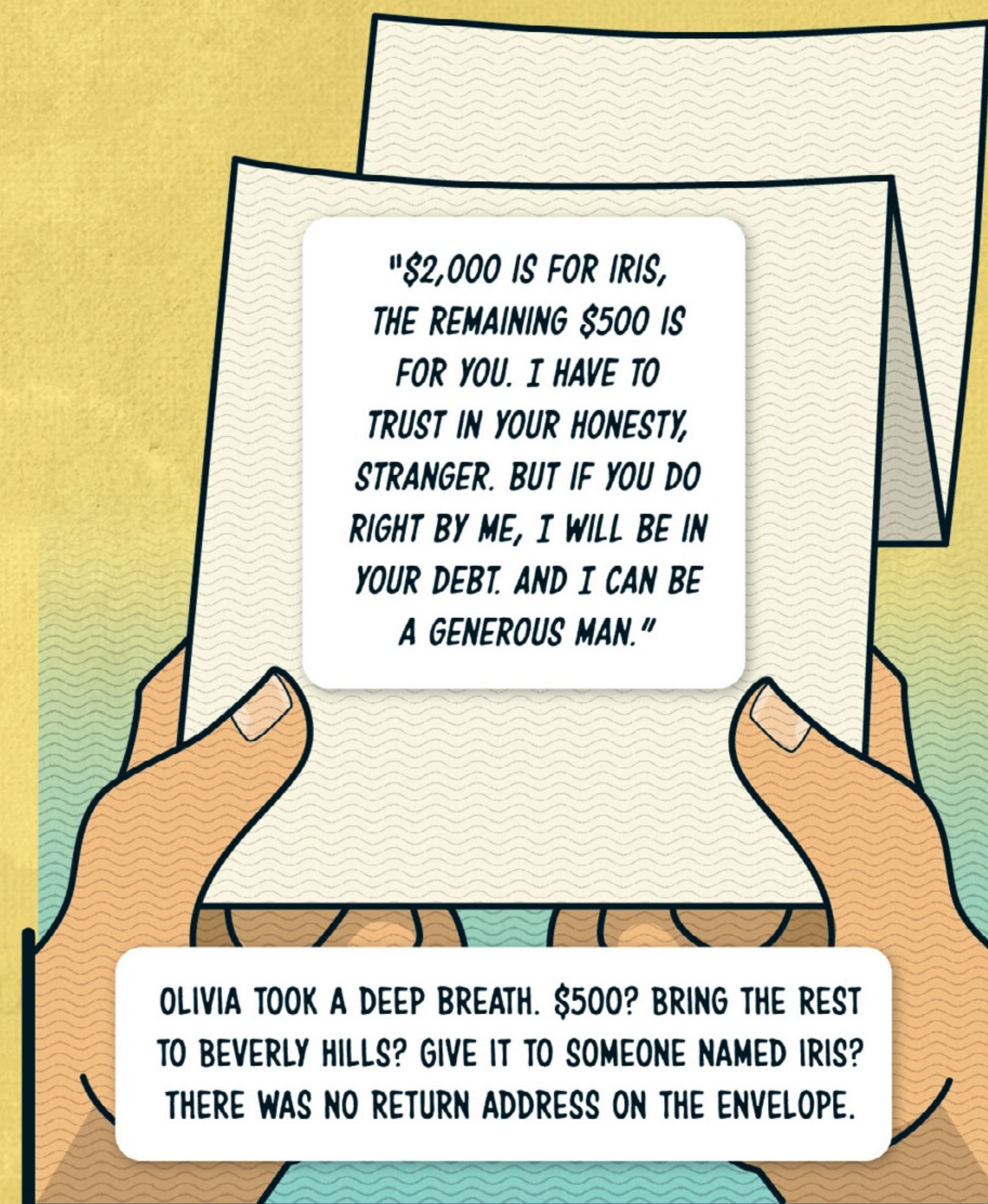
SHE PULLED OUT THE NOTE INSIDE. IT WAS WRITTEN IN CURSIVE.



"TO WHOEVER RECEIVES THIS LETTER, THIS IS MY LAST HOPE OF RESTORING CONTACT WITH SOMEONE I LOVE. IF IT IS WITHIN YOUR ABILITY TO DO SO, BRING THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER TO 3267 N. ALPINE DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS. ASK FOR IRIS. GIVE IT TO HER AND HER ONLY."



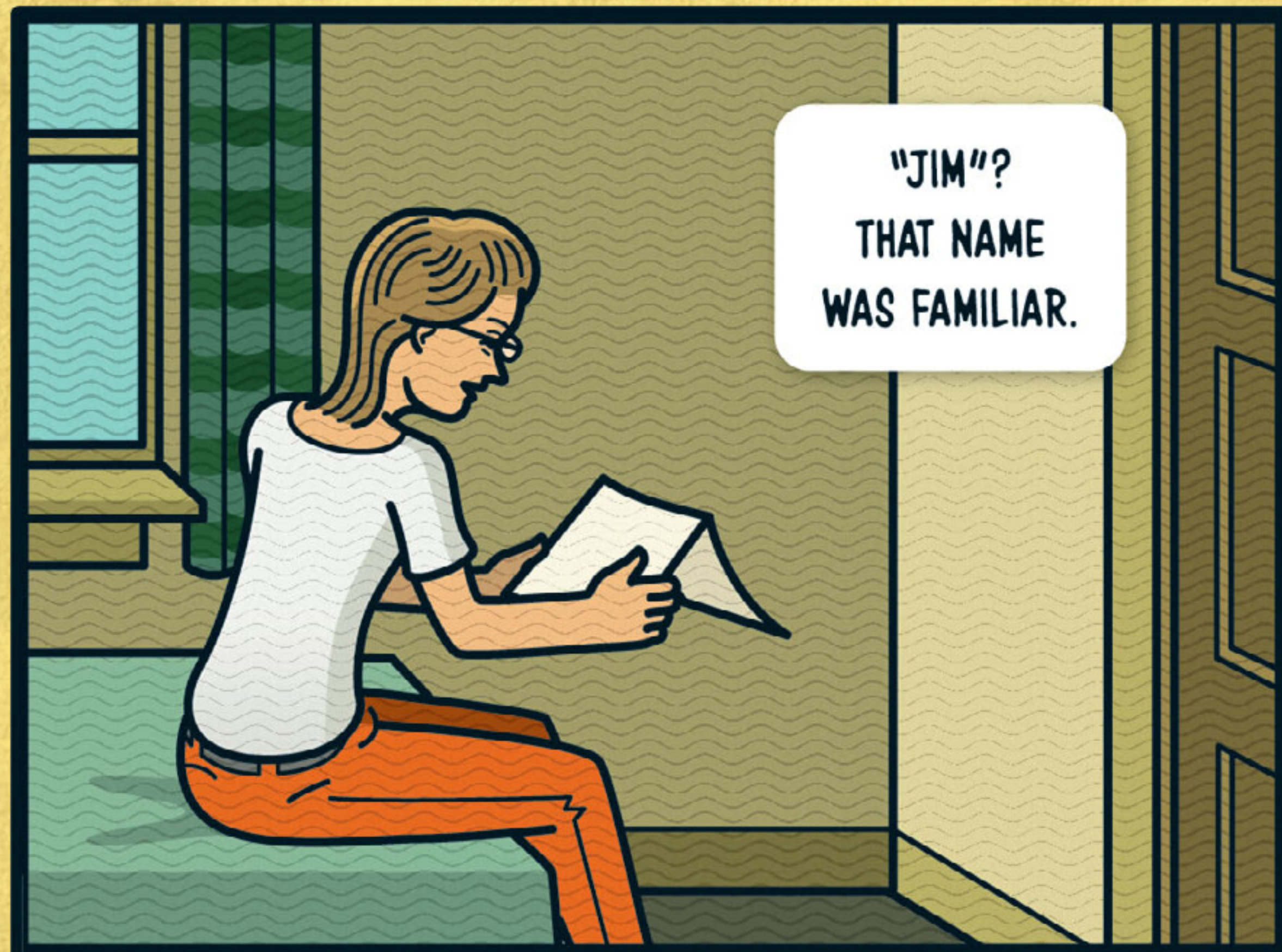
FIVE BILLS FLUTTERED OUT OF THE FOLDED NOTE. SHE LOOKED AT THEM CLOSELY. SHE'D NEVER SEEN A DENOMINATION LIKE THIS. IT DIDN'T LOOK QUITE REAL.



"\$2,000 IS FOR IRIS, THE REMAINING \$500 IS FOR YOU. I HAVE TO TRUST IN YOUR HONESTY, STRANGER. BUT IF YOU DO RIGHT BY ME, I WILL BE IN YOUR DEBT. AND I CAN BE A GENEROUS MAN."

OLIVIA TOOK A DEEP BREATH. \$500? BRING THE REST TO BEVERLY HILLS? GIVE IT TO SOMEONE NAMED IRIS? THERE WAS NO RETURN ADDRESS ON THE ENVELOPE.

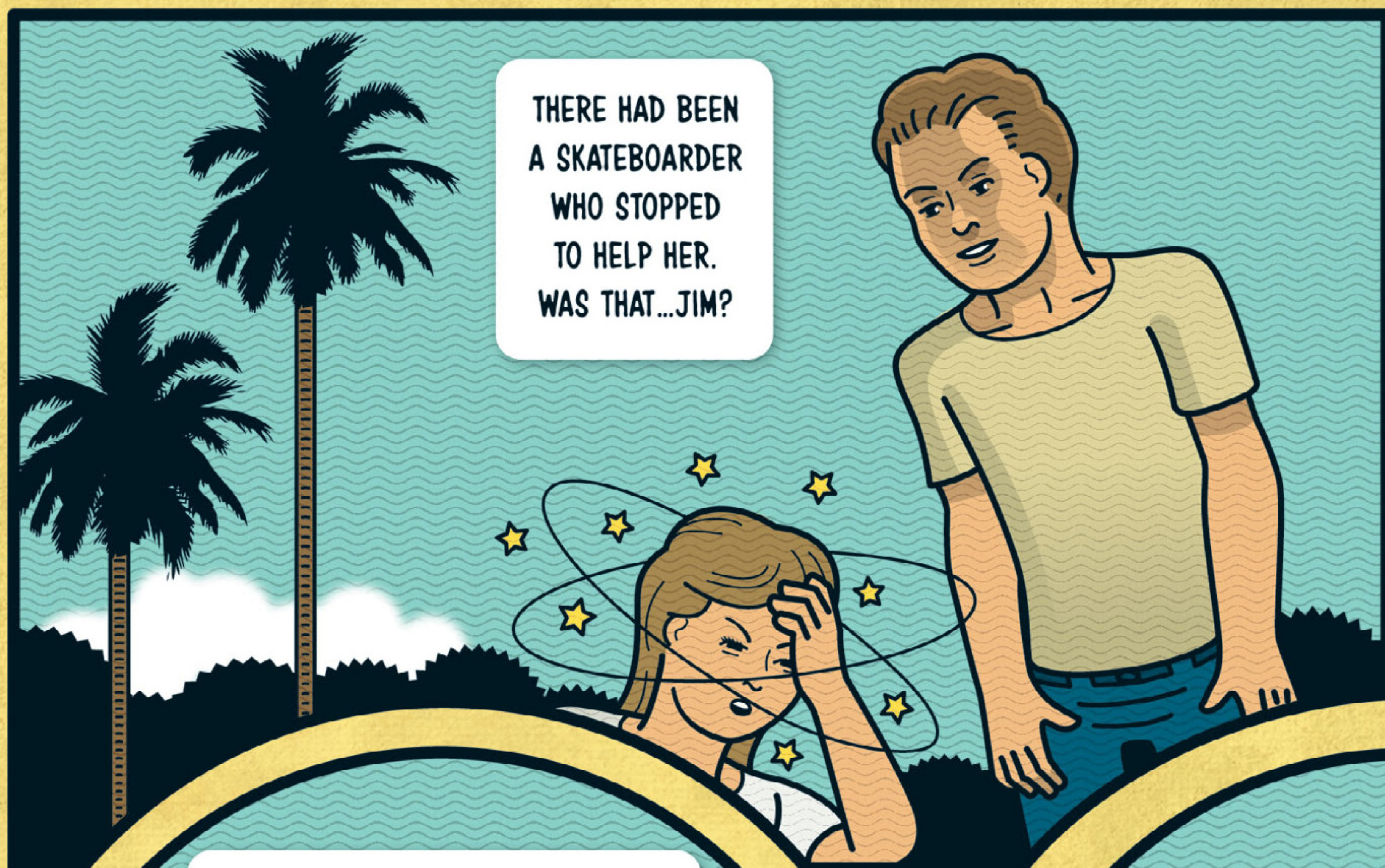
THE NOTE CONTINUED.



"JIM"?
THAT NAME
WAS FAMILIAR.



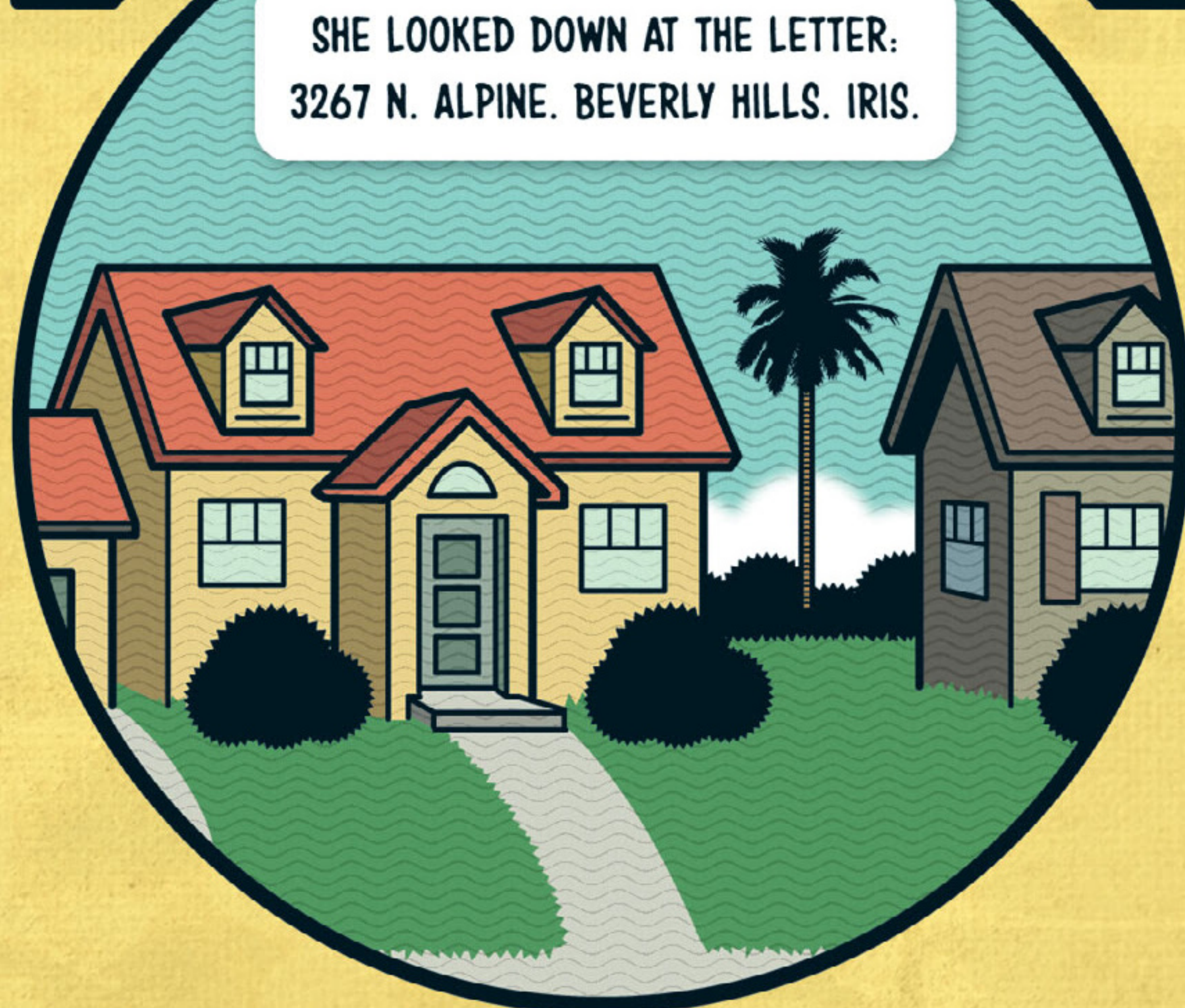
OLIVIA THOUGHT
BACK TO THE PARK
AND THE WOODY
FEELING SHE'D FELT
RIGHT BEFORE
SHE FELL OVER.



THERE HAD BEEN
A SKATEBOARDER
WHO STOPPED
TO HELP HER.
WAS THAT...JIM?



THERE WAS ANOTHER PERSON.
THE GUY SHE TALKED TO
WHILE THEY WALKED THROUGH
THE PARK. THE ONE WITH
THE QUIET VOICE.
THAT WAS JIM.



SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE LETTER:
3267 N. ALPINE. BEVERLY HILLS. IRIS.

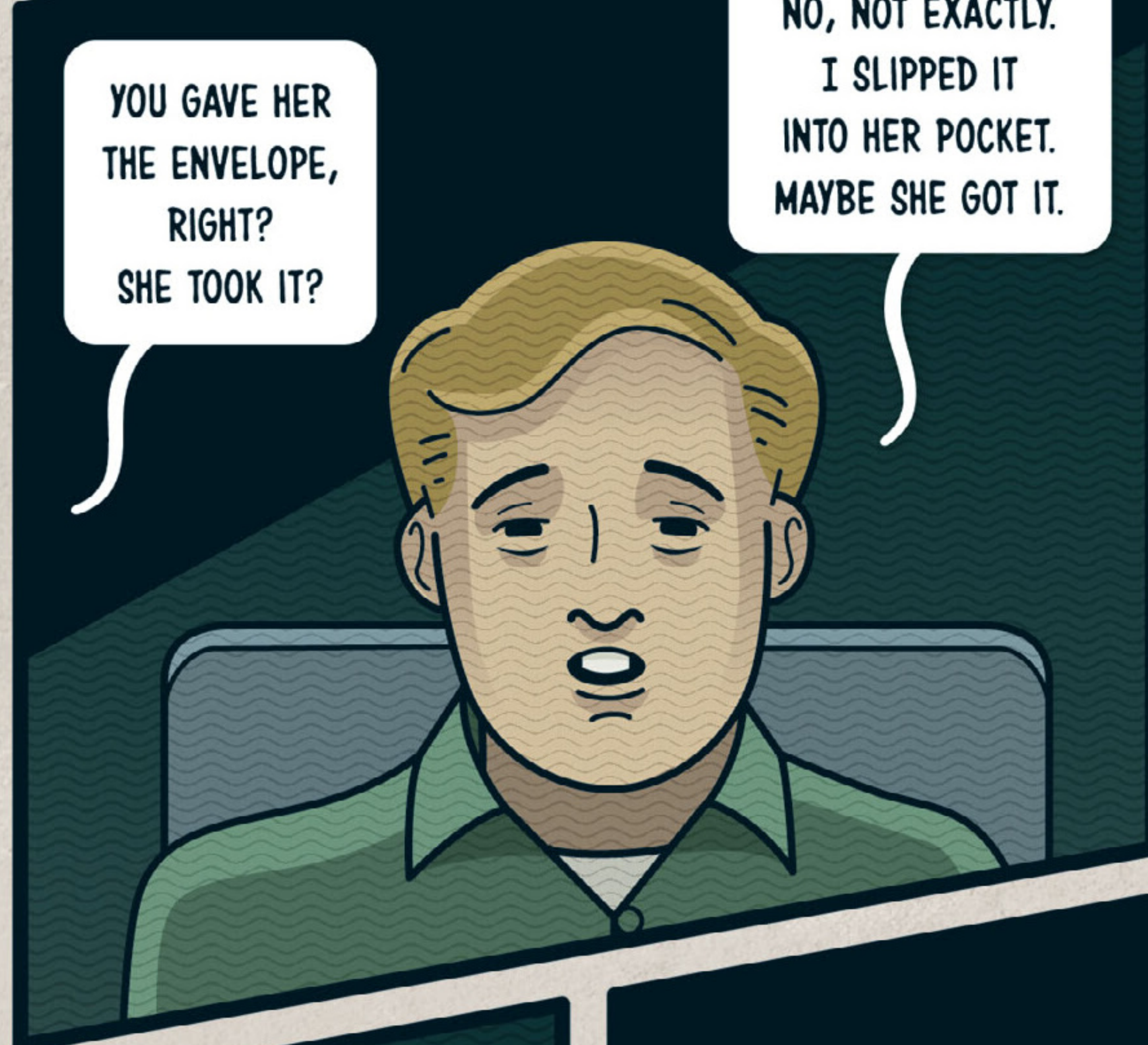
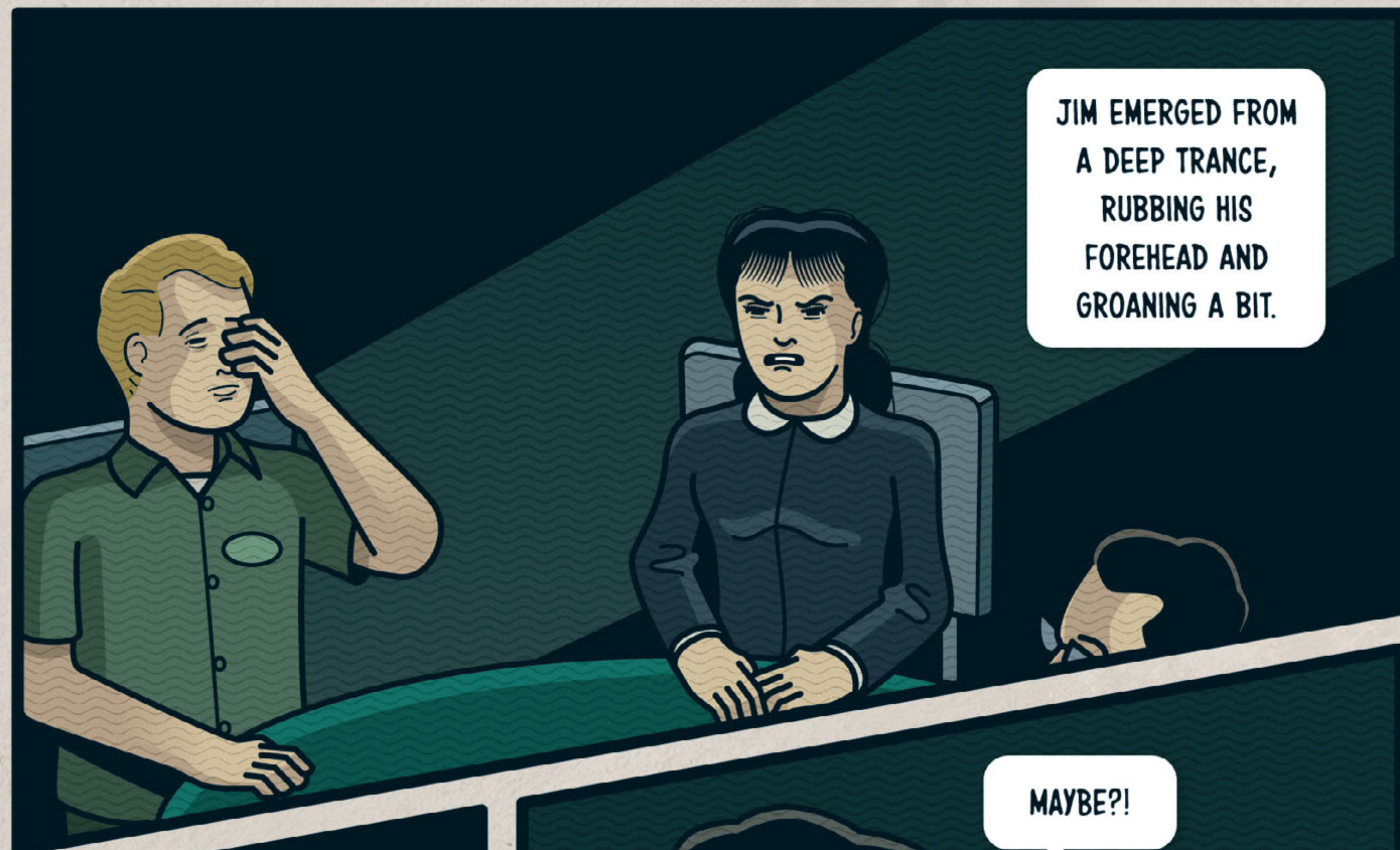


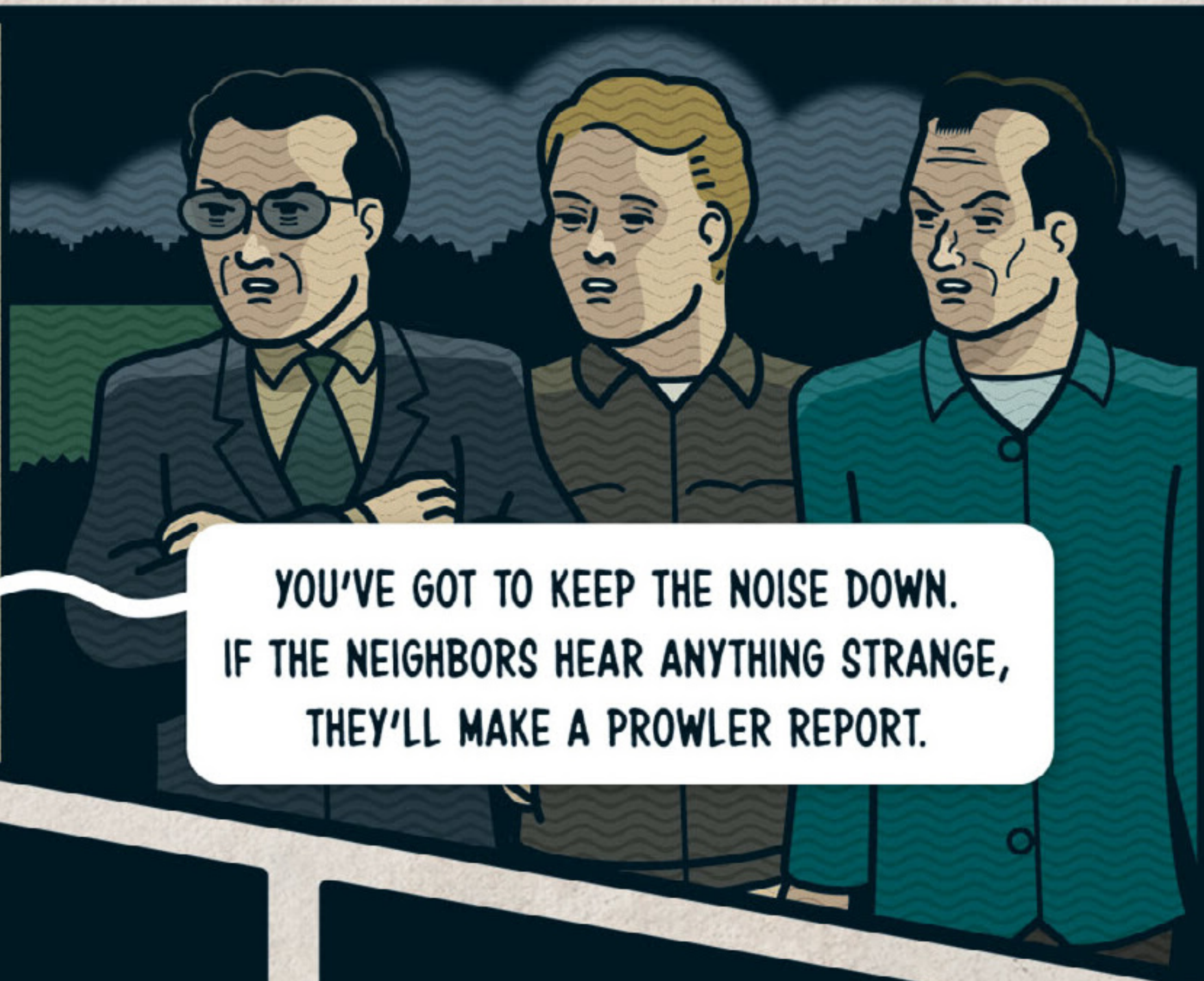
DID HE SLIP THE
ENVELOPE IN HER
POCKET WHEN SHE
WAS UNCONSCIOUS?
WAS THAT WHEN
THEY MET?



SHE COULD GO
TOMORROW.
WHO WAS IRIS?

CHAPTER 6





YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP THE NOISE DOWN.
IF THE NEIGHBORS HEAR ANYTHING STRANGE,
THEY'LL MAKE A PROWLER REPORT.



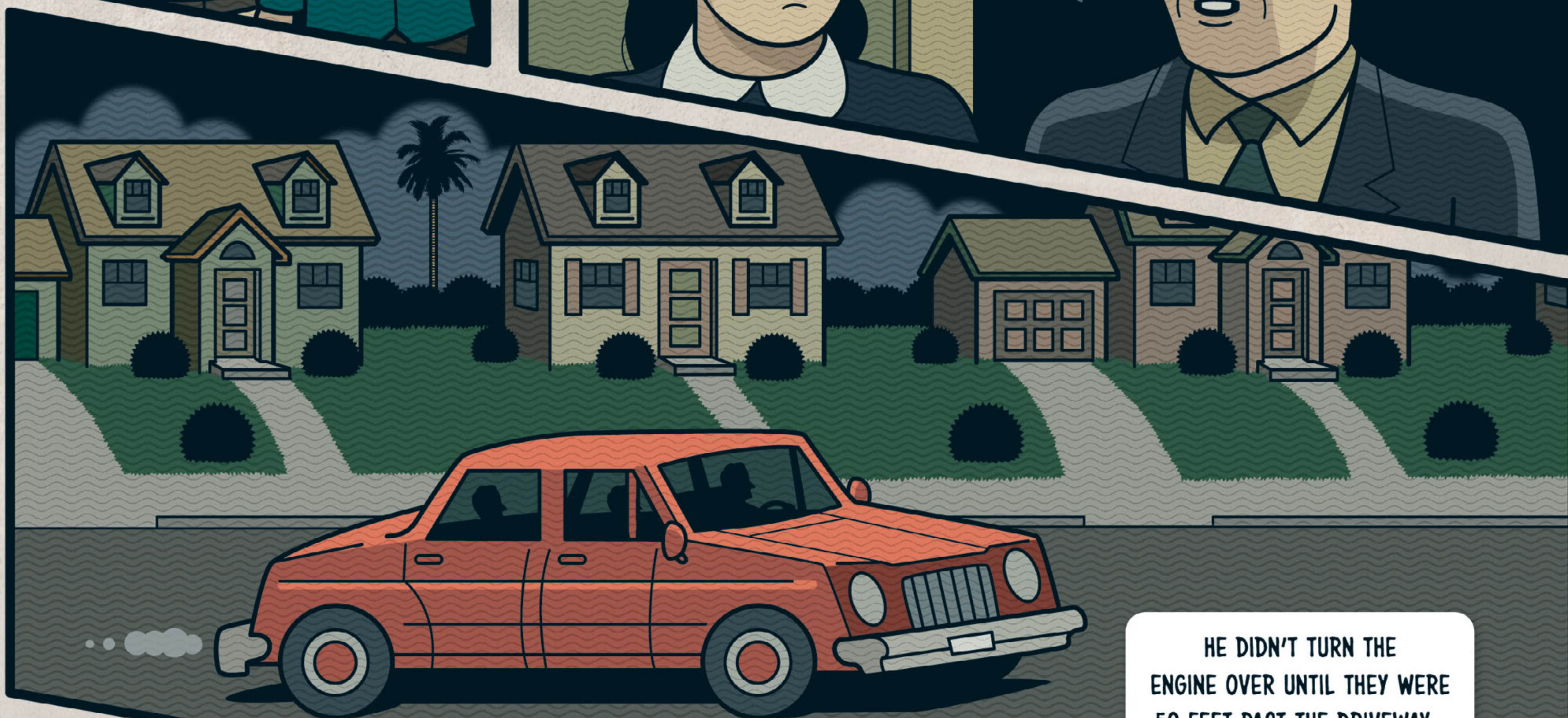
HE'S GOT A
REAL CONNECTION.
I COULD FEEL IT.
KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.



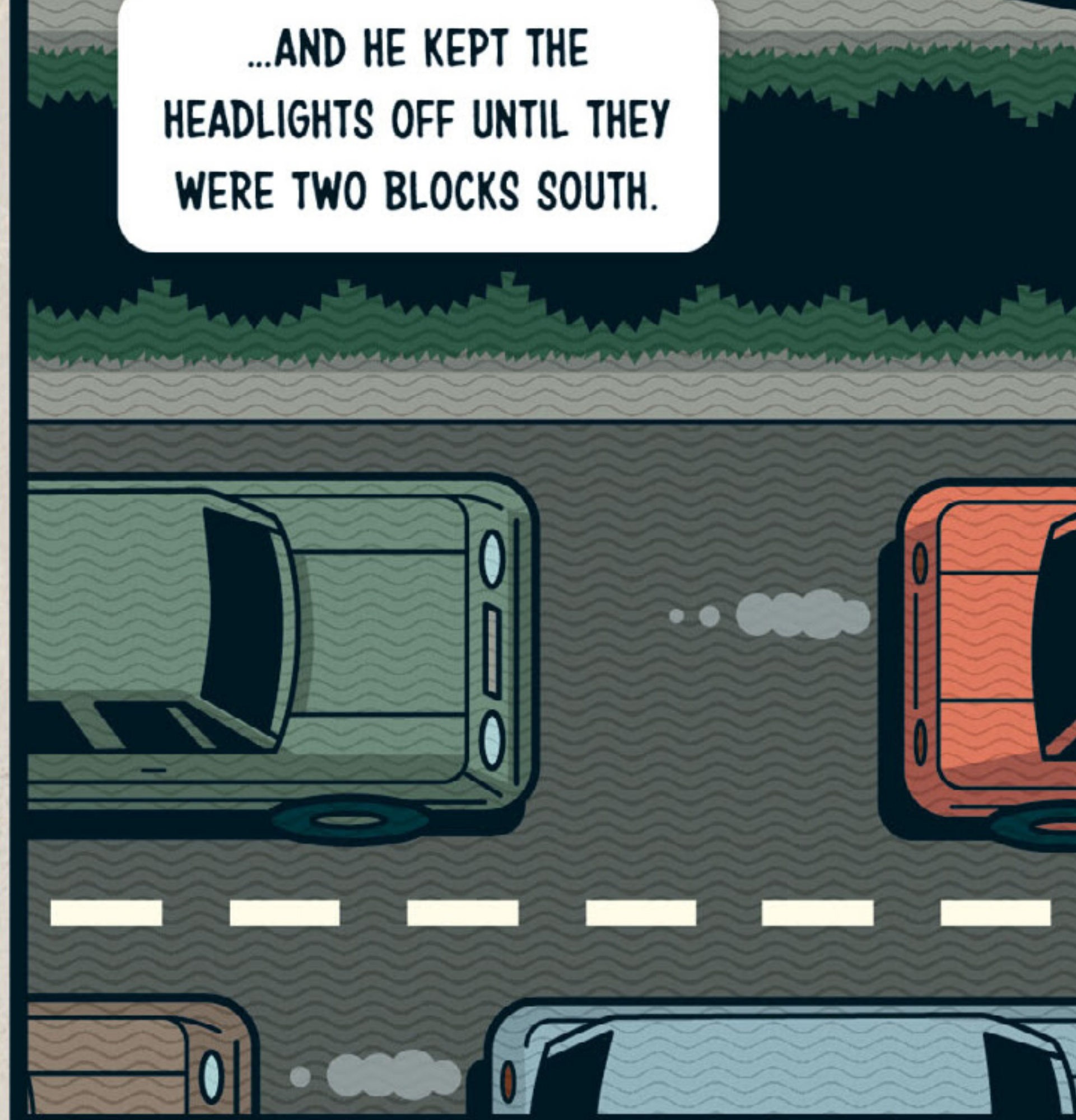
DON'T WORRY.
HE'S NOT
GETTING OUT
OF MY SIGHT.



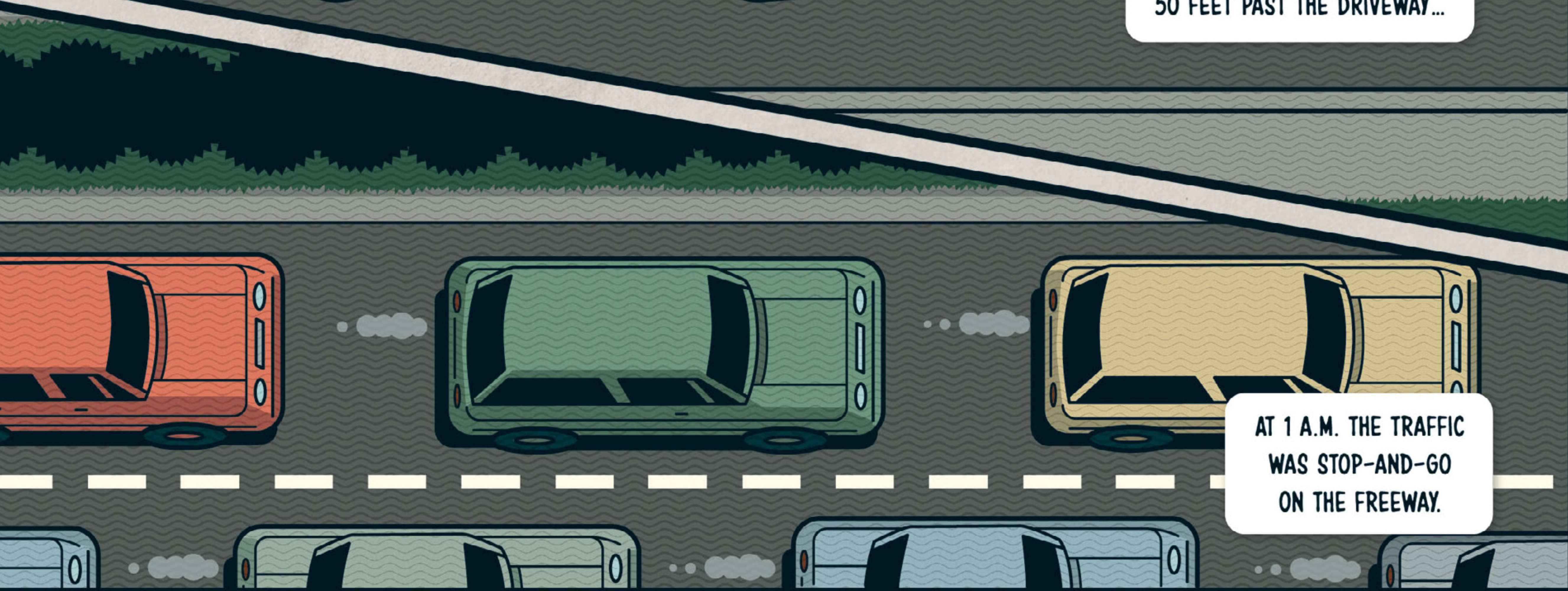
RAYMOND PUT THE CAR
IN NEUTRAL AND LET IT
ROLL DOWN THE DRIVE.



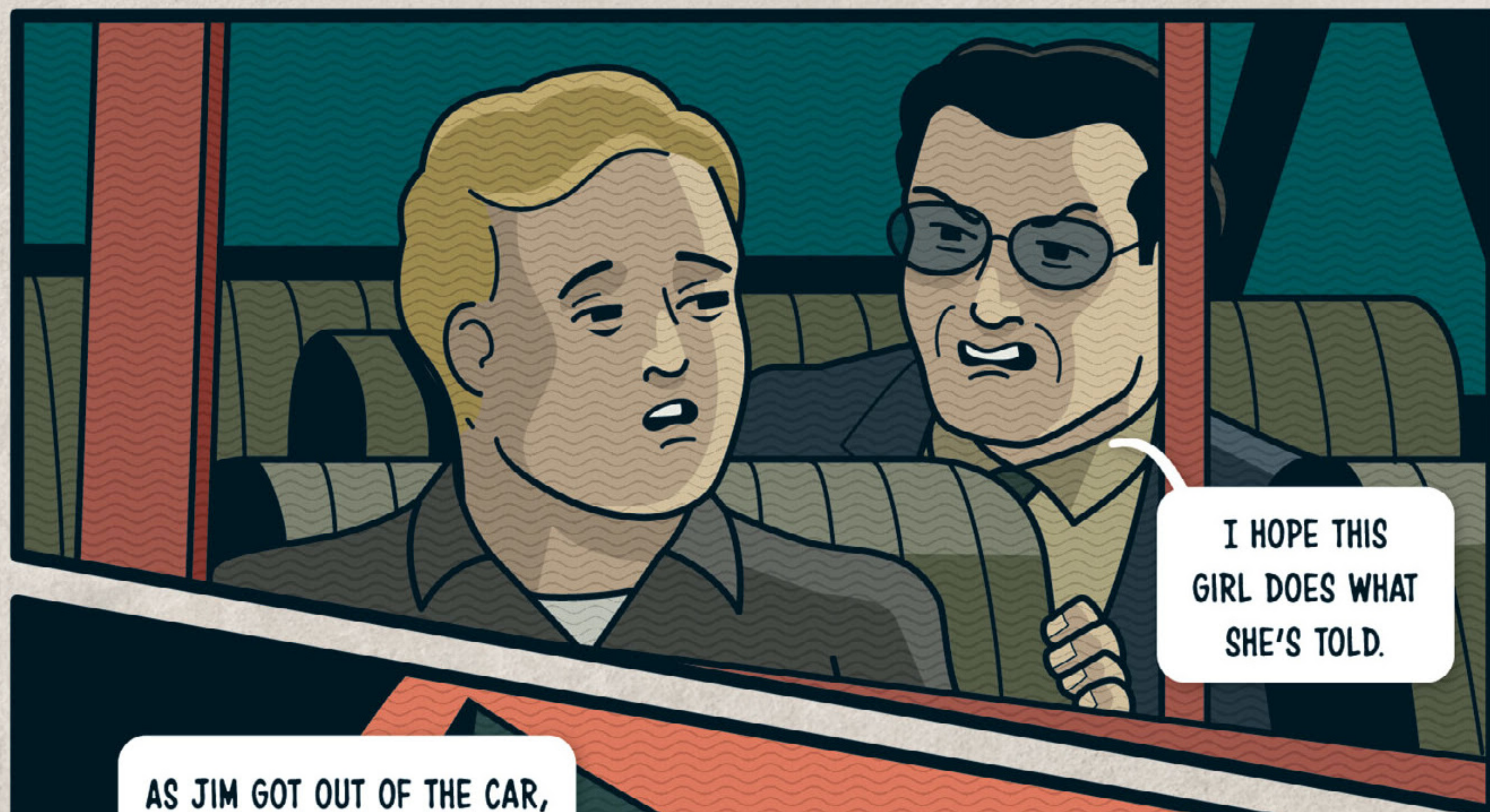
HE DIDN'T TURN THE
ENGINE OVER UNTIL THEY WERE
50 FEET PAST THE DRIVEWAY...



...AND HE KEPT THE
HEADLIGHTS OFF UNTIL THEY
WERE TWO BLOCKS SOUTH.



AT 1 A.M. THE TRAFFIC
WAS STOP-AND-GO
ON THE FREEWAY.



I HOPE THIS
GIRL DOES WHAT
SHE'S TOLD.



FOR YOUR SAKE...
AND FOR IRIS'.

AS JIM GOT OUT OF THE CAR,
RAYMOND GAVE HIM A
SLY SNEER.



WE'LL BE IN TOUCH.



HE HEARD THE CAR
AS IT DROVE OFF.
THE BUILDING
WAS QUIET.



IRIS.



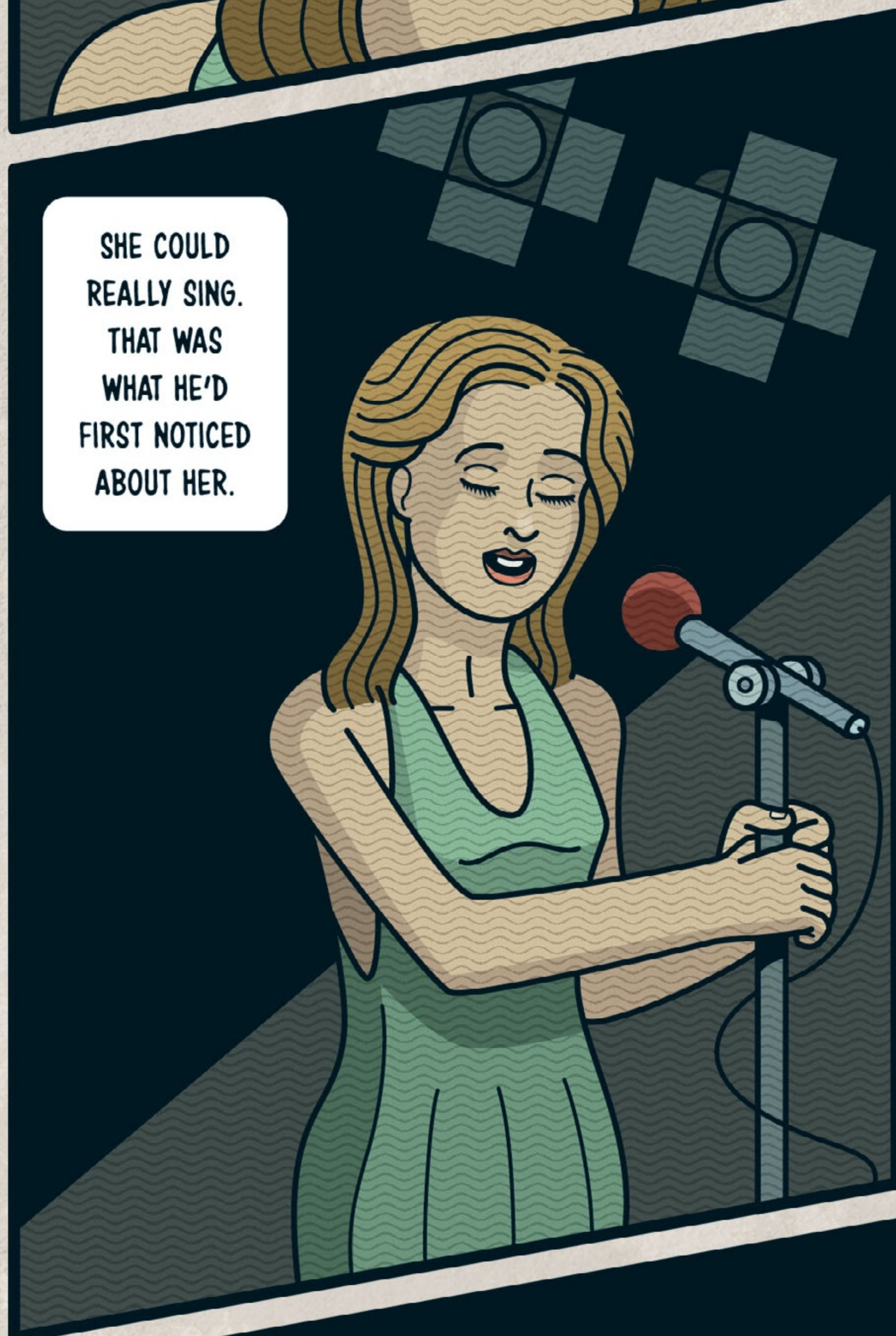
JIM LOOKED OUT AT
THE DARKENED SKY.



IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME
SINCE HE'D THOUGHT
ABOUT HER. THE HURT
WAS GONE, BUT THERE
WAS STILL THAT LONGING.



THAT THREAD OF DESIRE
STILL RAN THROUGH HIM.
EVEN HERE.



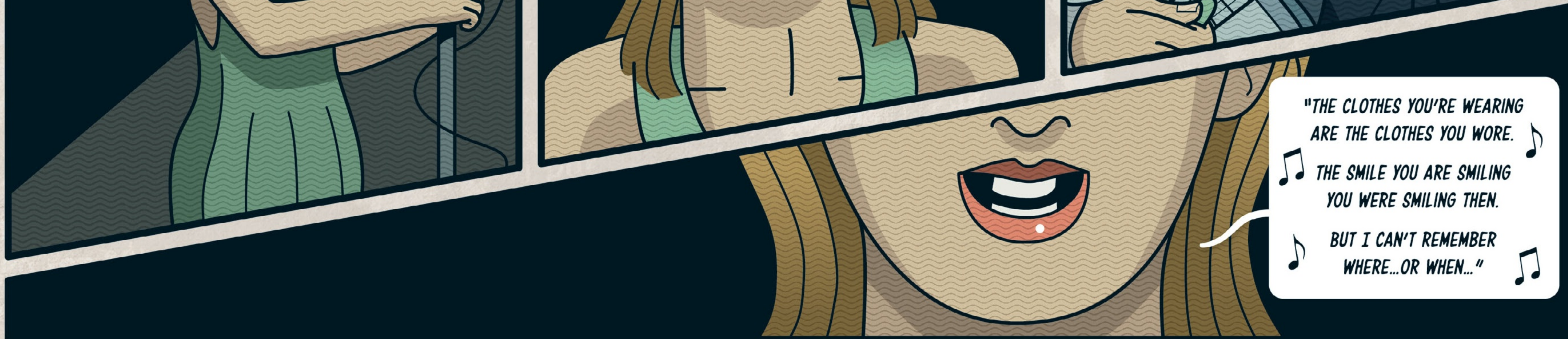
SHE COULD
REALLY SING.
THAT WAS
WHAT HE'D
FIRST NOTICED
ABOUT HER.



A BREATHY DELIVERY
WITH A VIBRATO THAT
EXTENDED NOTES LONGER
THAN SEEMED POSSIBLE.

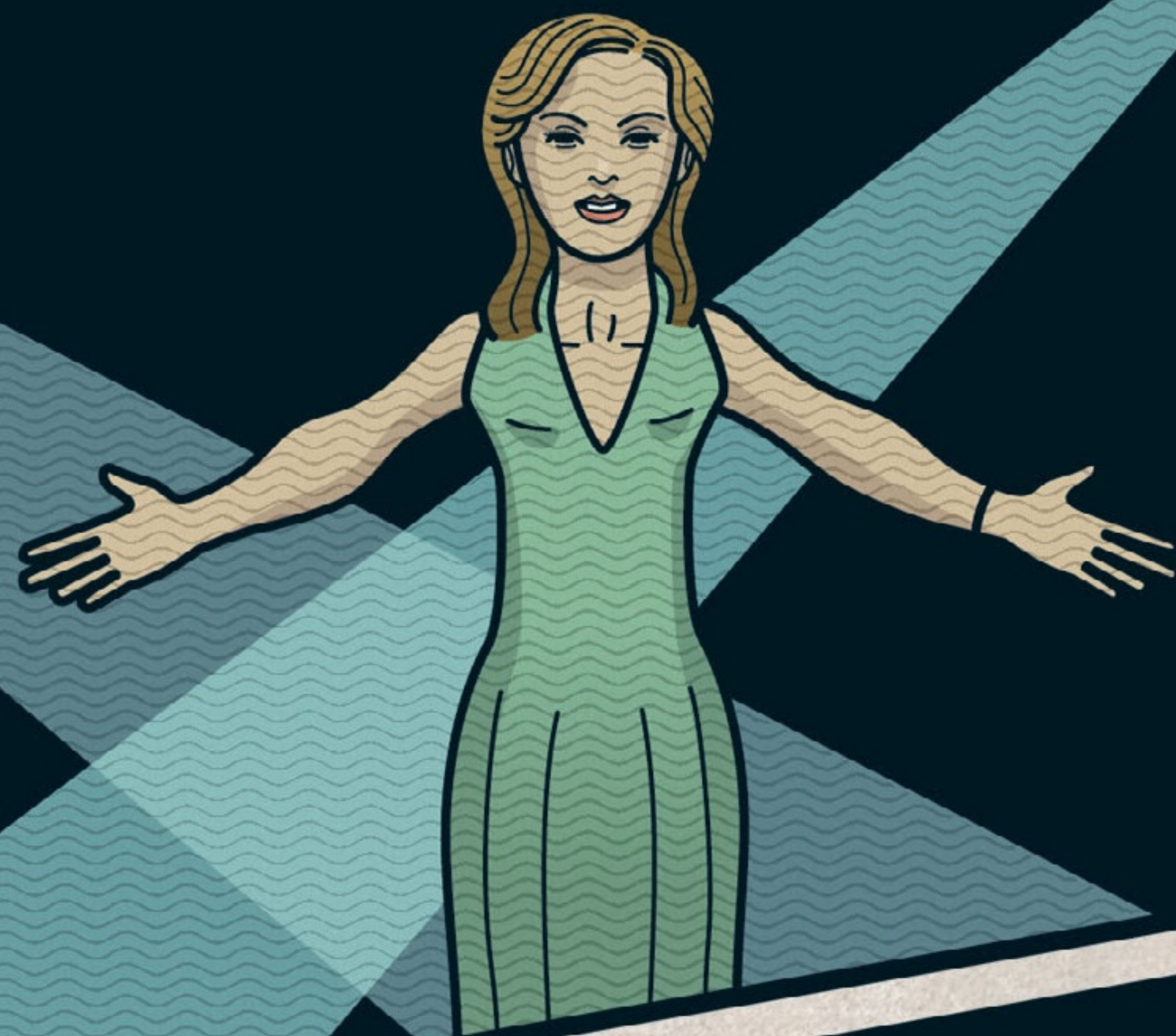


"WHERE OR WHEN"
WAS HER SIGNATURE SONG.
IT GOT HIM EVERY TIME.



"THE CLOTHES YOU'RE WEARING
ARE THE CLOTHES YOU WORE."
THE SMILE YOU ARE SMILING
YOU WERE SMILING THEN.
BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER
WHERE...OR WHEN..."

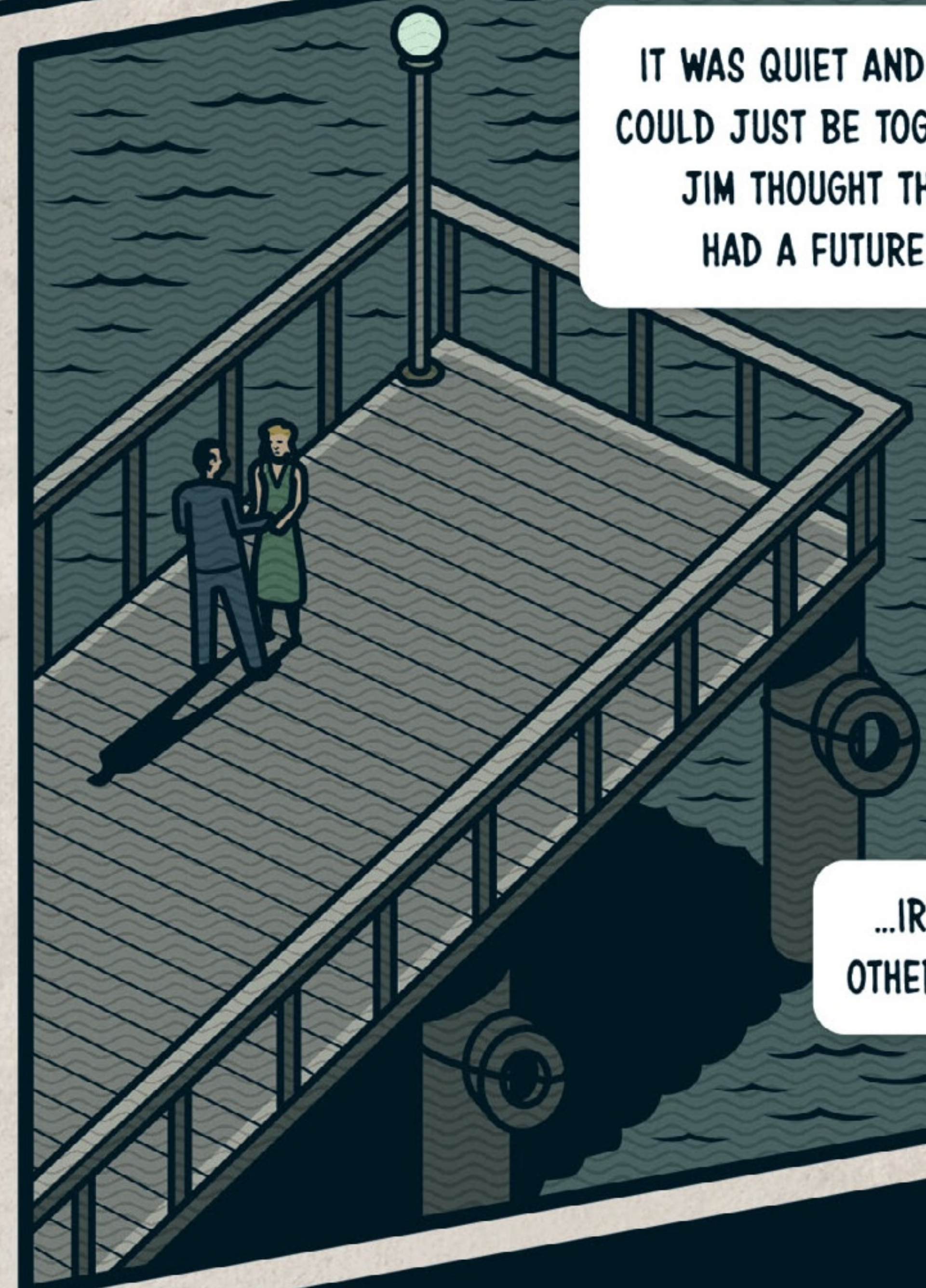
THEY STARTED TALKING
BETWEEN SETS.
HE'D PLAYED GUITAR
IN SOME COMBOS, AND
HE TOLD HER HOW MUCH
HE LIKED HER BOOK.
"YEAH?" SHE'D SAID,
GIVING HIM THAT LOOK.



HE'D FALLEN FOR HER,
HEAD OVER HEELS.
HE TRIED TO PLAY IT COOL
BUT EVERYONE SAW IT.
EVERYONE BUT EDDIE.



IT WAS QUIET AND THEY
COULD JUST BE TOGETHER.
JIM THOUGHT THEY
HAD A FUTURE...



...IRIS HAD
OTHER IDEAS.

AFTER THE CLUB
CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT,
THEY USED TO MEET AT
THE SANTA MONICA PIER.



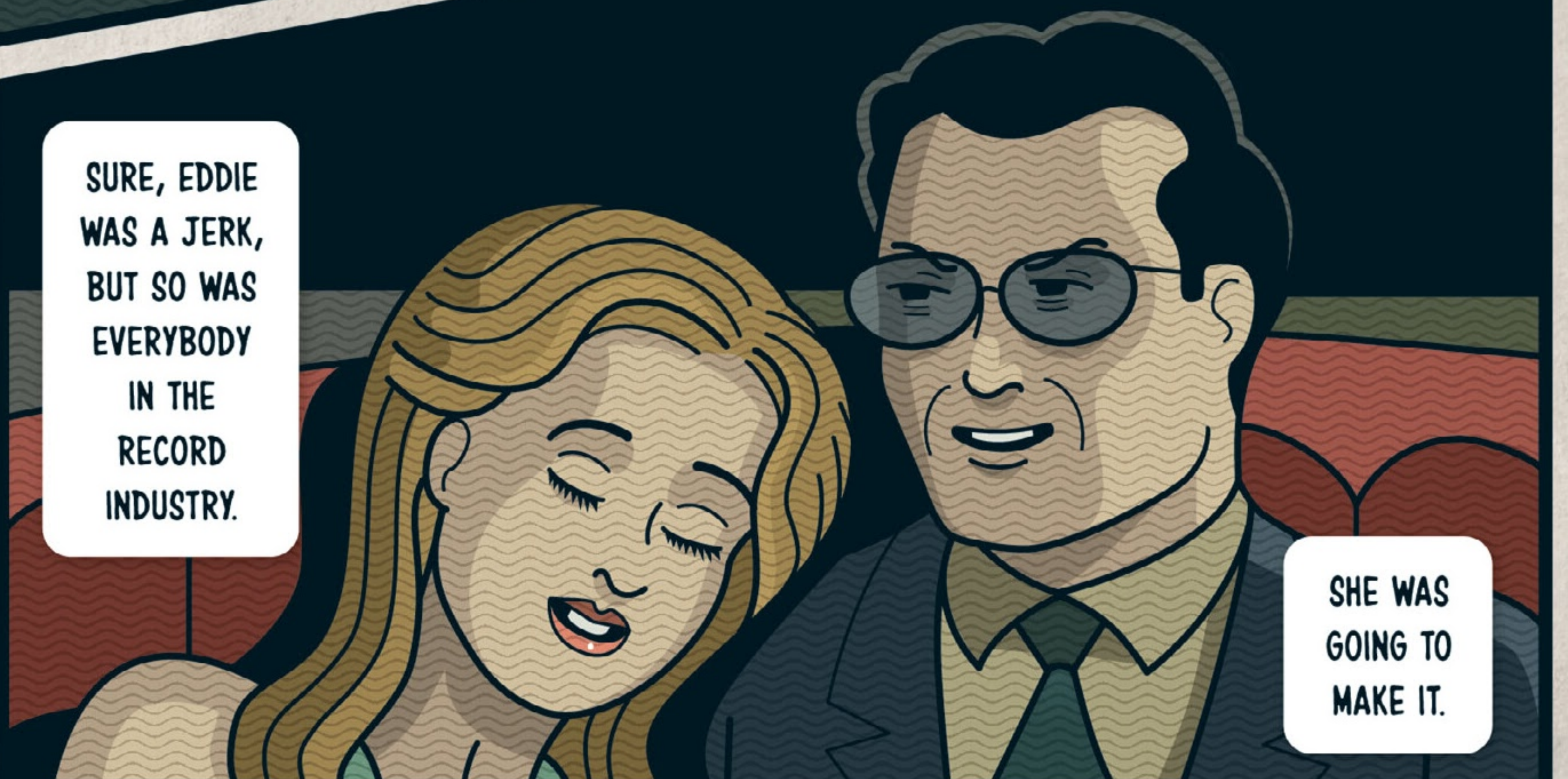
ALWAYS CAREFUL,
THEY ARRIVED IN
SEPARATE CARS.



EDDIE HAD QUITE A THING
FOR HER, AND EDDIE WIELDED
POWER. THE KIND OF POWER
THAT COULD GET HER A
RECORD CONTRACT.



SURE, EDDIE
WAS A JERK,
BUT SO WAS
EVERYBODY
IN THE
RECORD
INDUSTRY.



SHE WAS
GOING TO
MAKE IT.



FOR THE LONGEST TIME, JIM THOUGHT IT WAS RAYMOND WHO HAD RATTED HIM OUT TO EDDIE.



RAYMOND WAS A SHIFTY LITTLE JUNKIE, BUT HE WASN'T ALL THAT SMART.

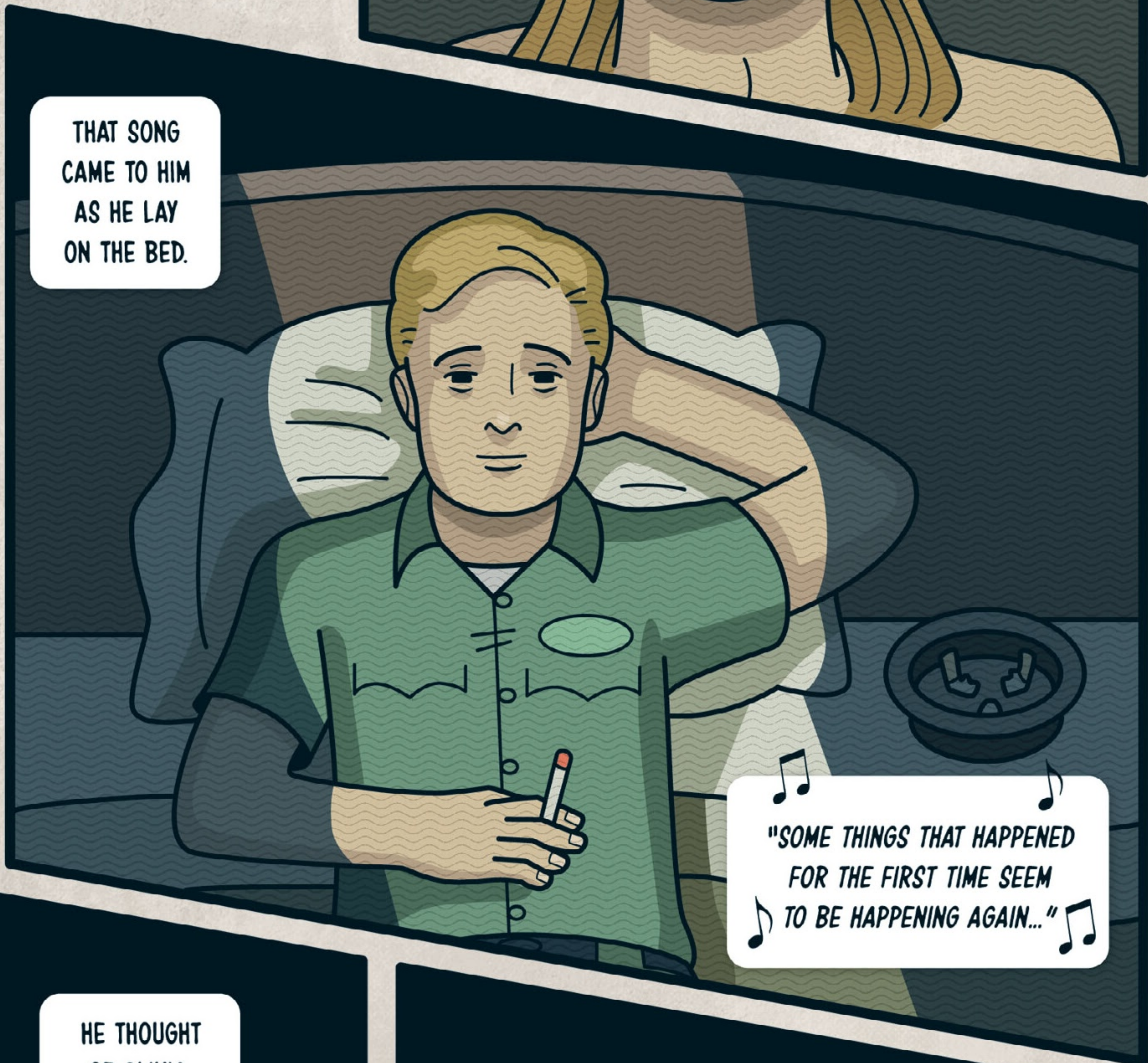


IT WAS IRIS WHO DID IT.



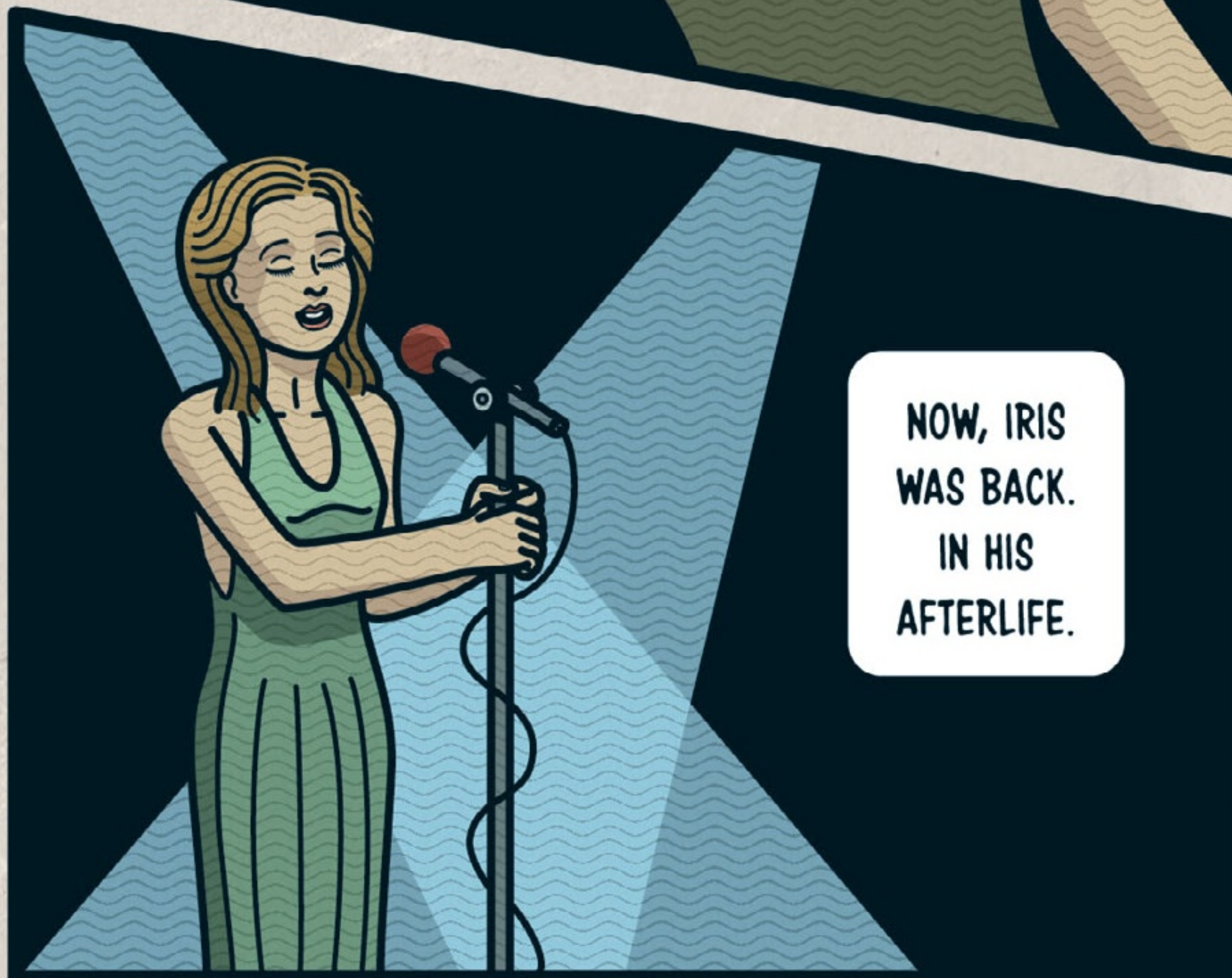
WHEN EDDIE HAD DISCOVERED THEIR AFFAIR, IRIS BLAMED IT ALL ON JIM.

EDDIE WAS SO ANGRY AT JIM THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE HE WAS BEING PLAYED.

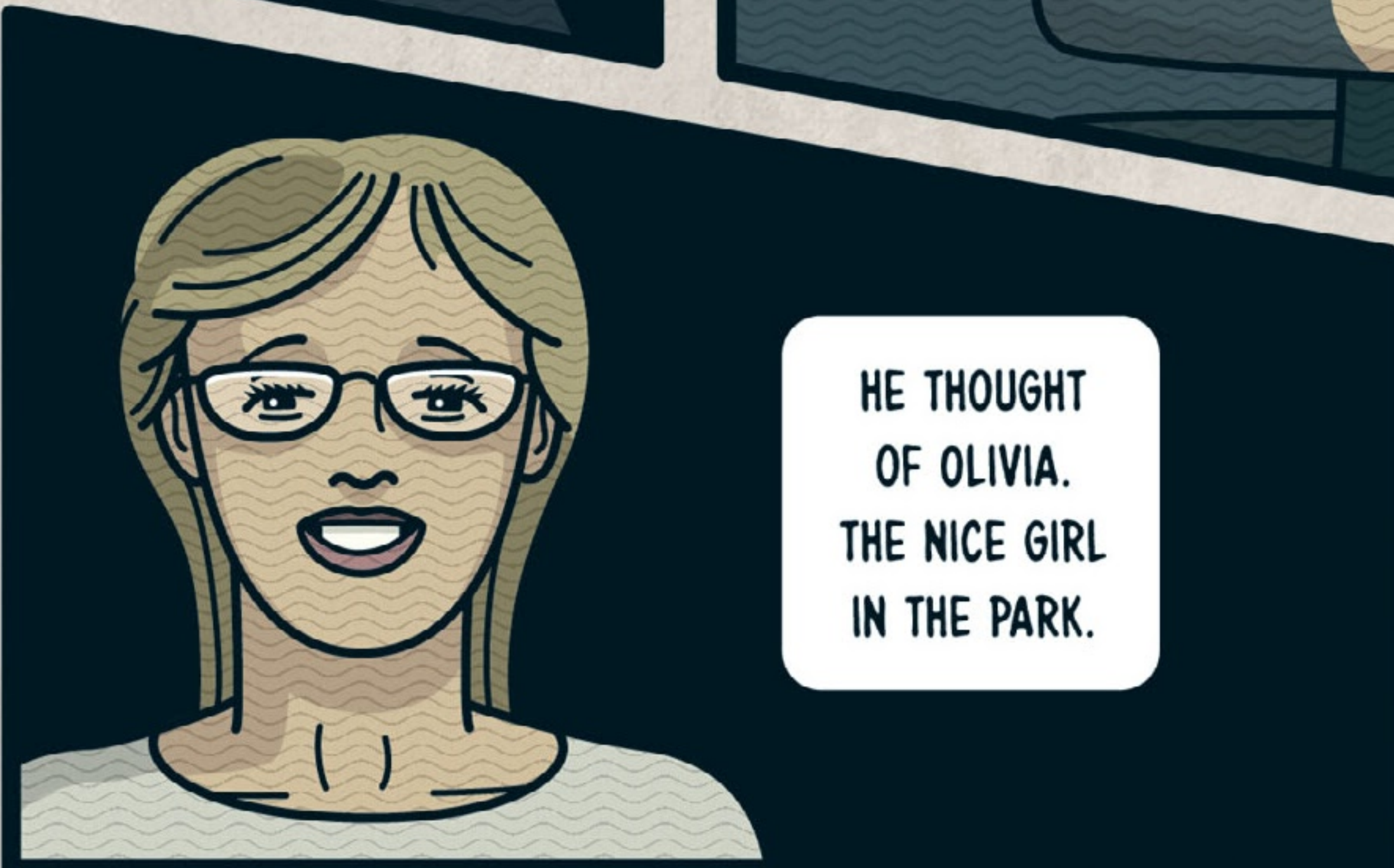


THAT SONG CAME TO HIM AS HE LAY ON THE BED.

♪ "SOME THINGS THAT HAPPENED FOR THE FIRST TIME SEEM TO BE HAPPENING AGAIN..." ♪



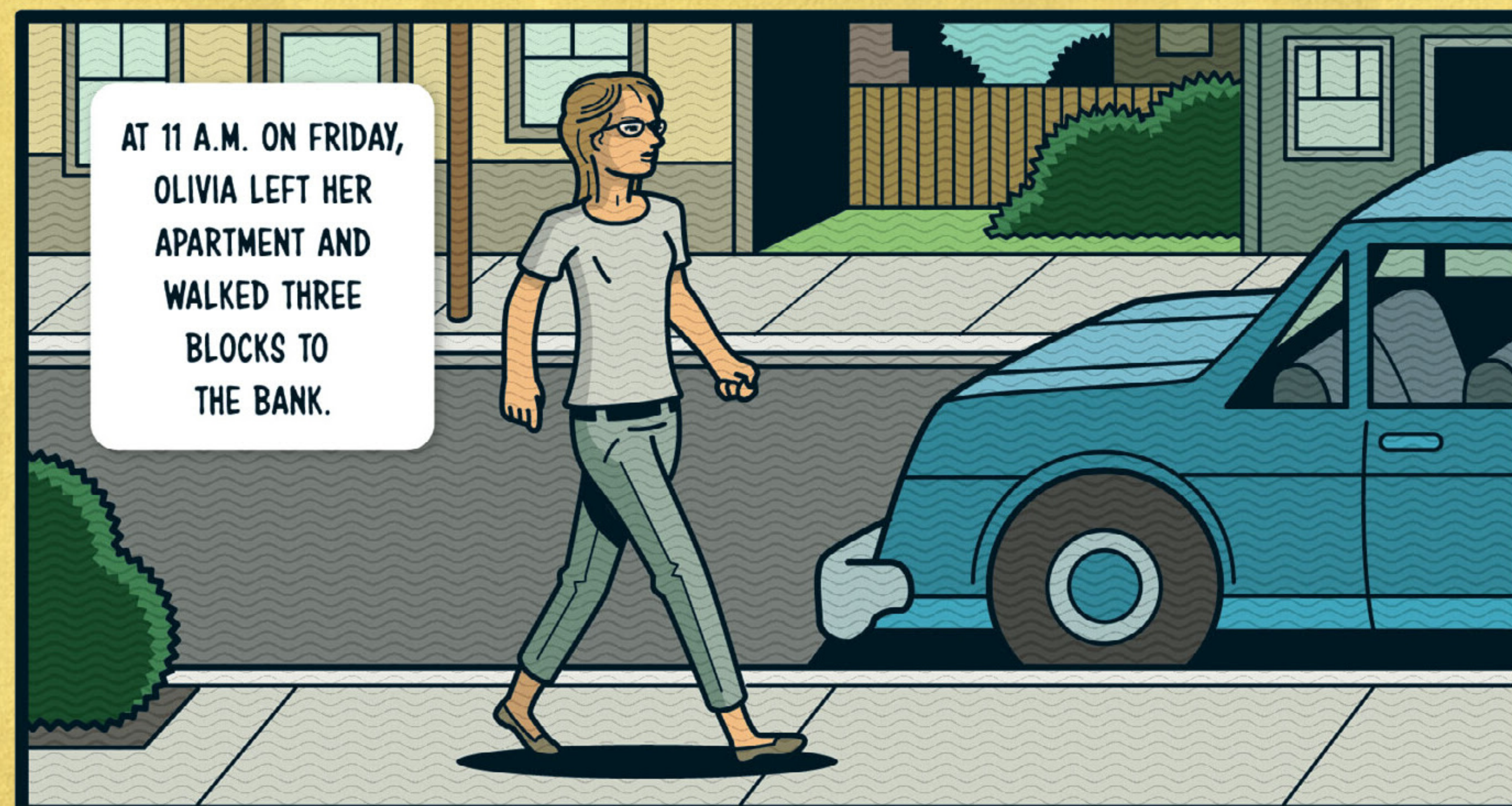
NOW, IRIS WAS BACK. IN HIS AFTERLIFE.

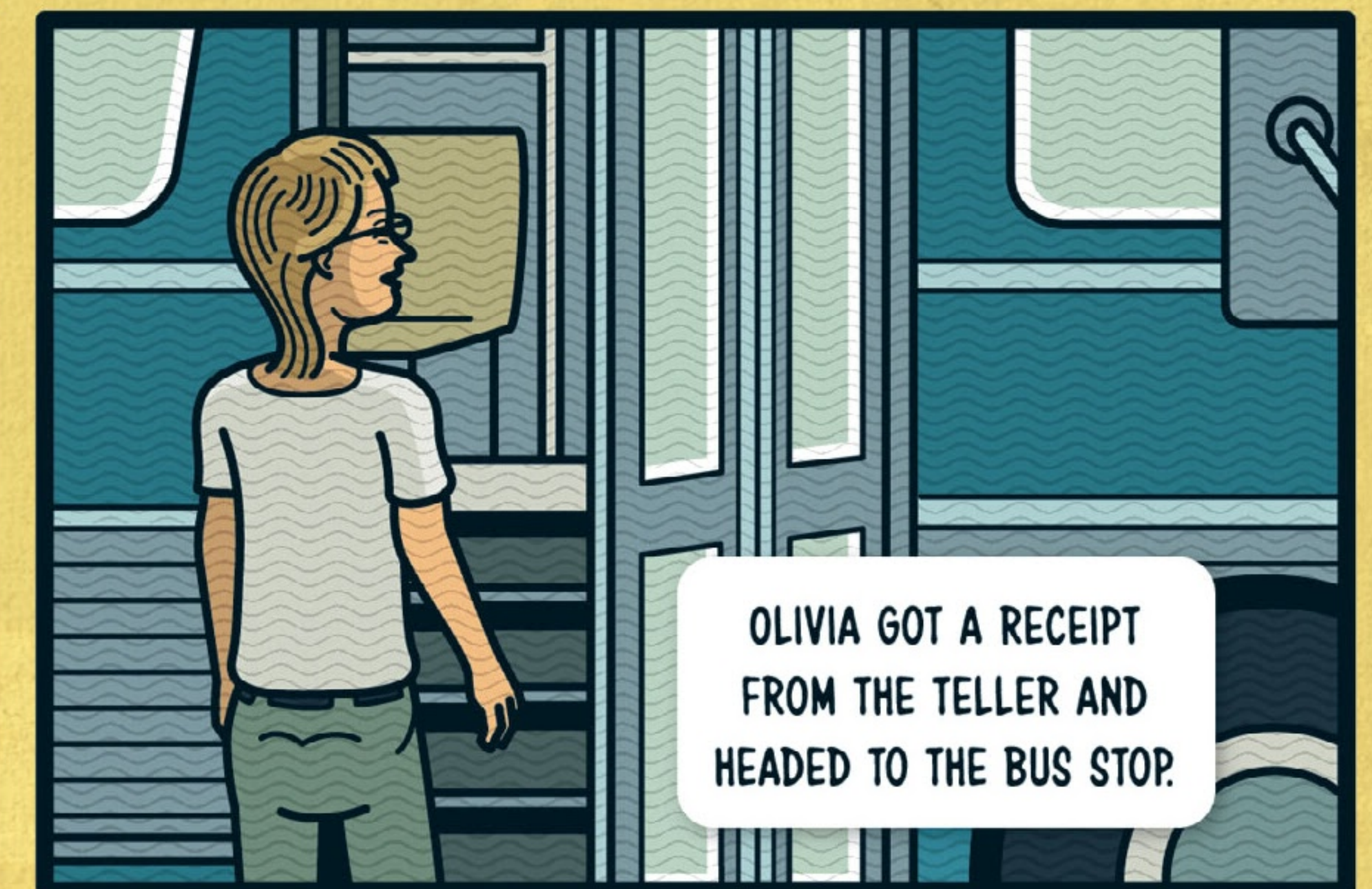
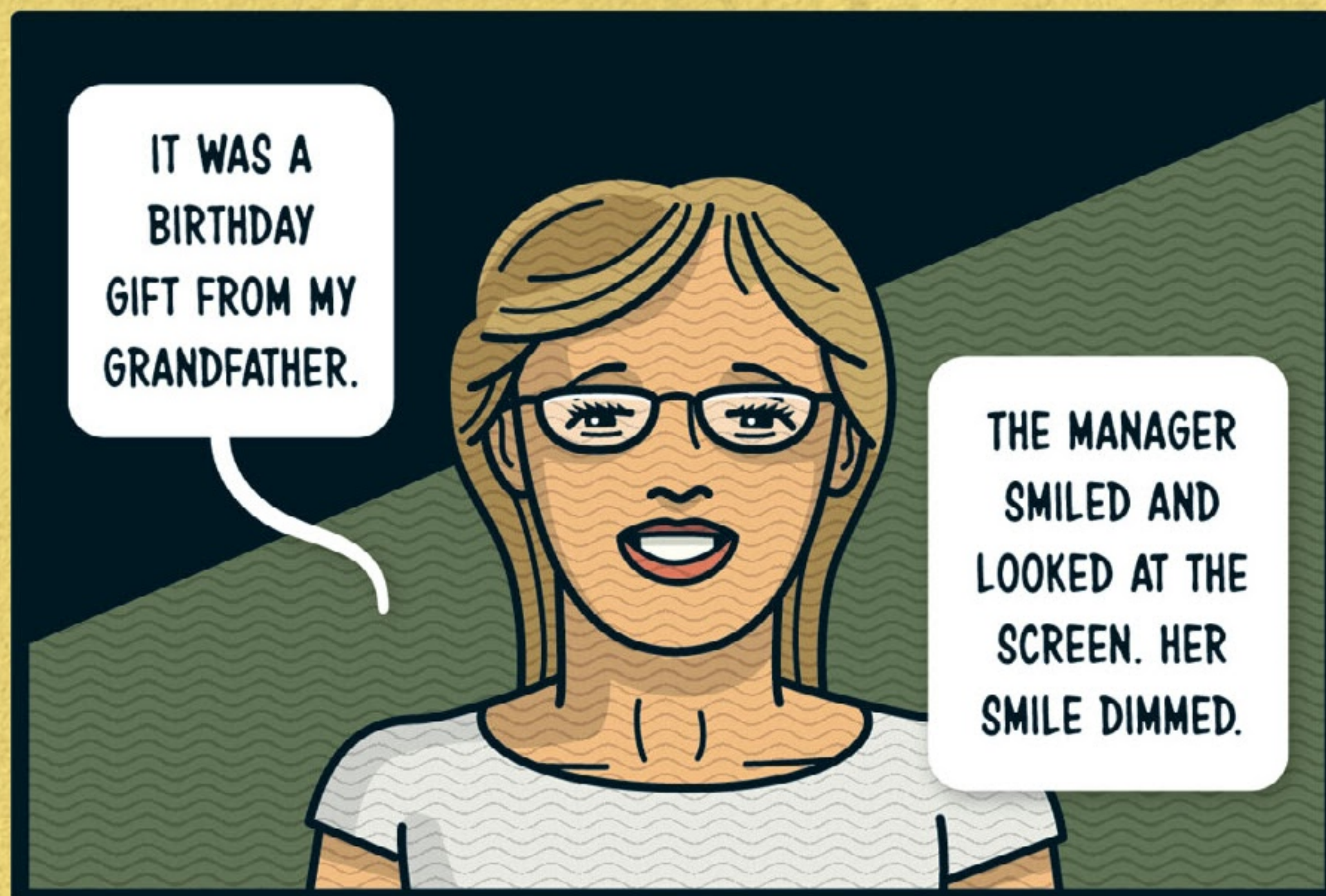


HE THOUGHT OF OLIVIA. THE NICE GIRL IN THE PARK.



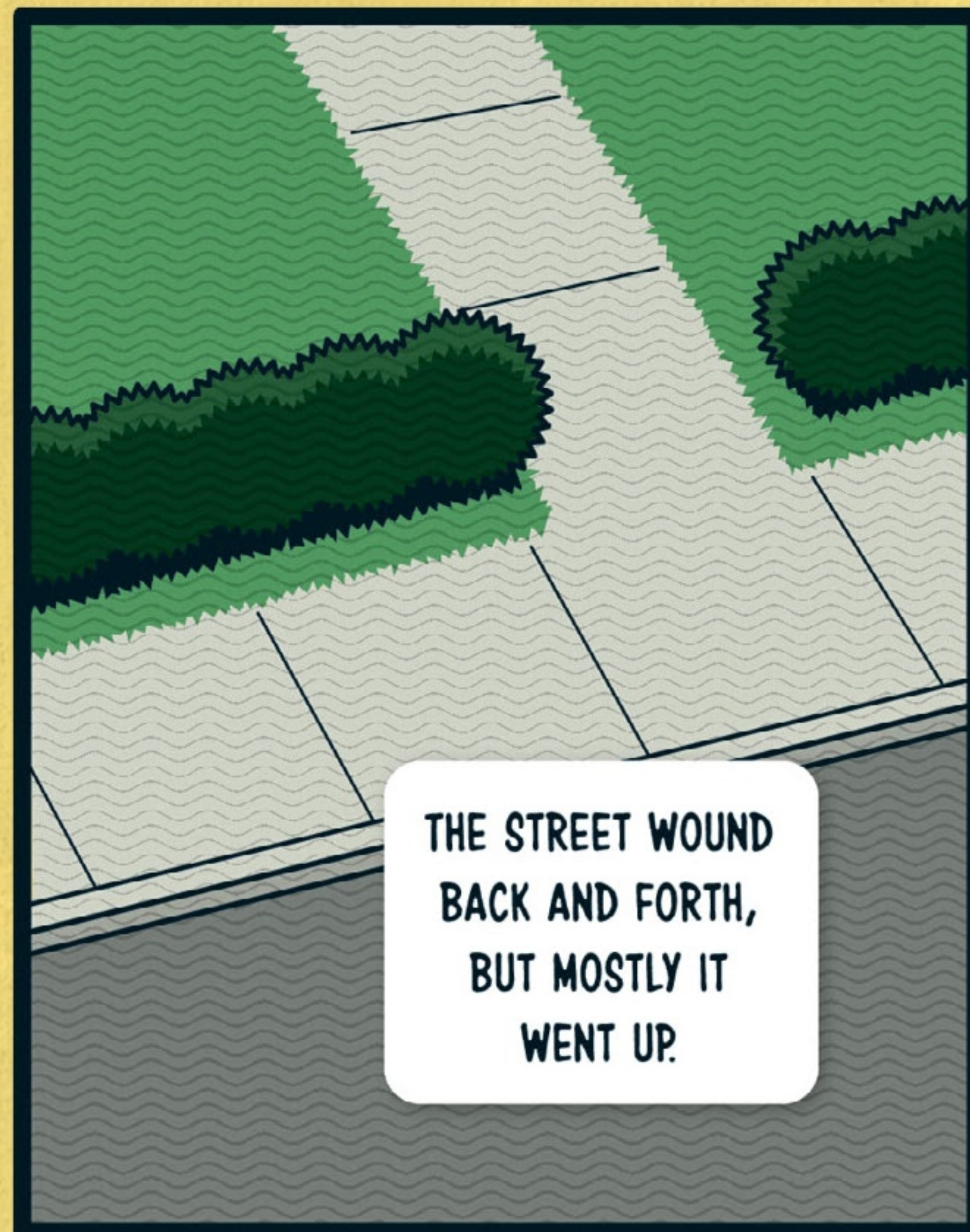
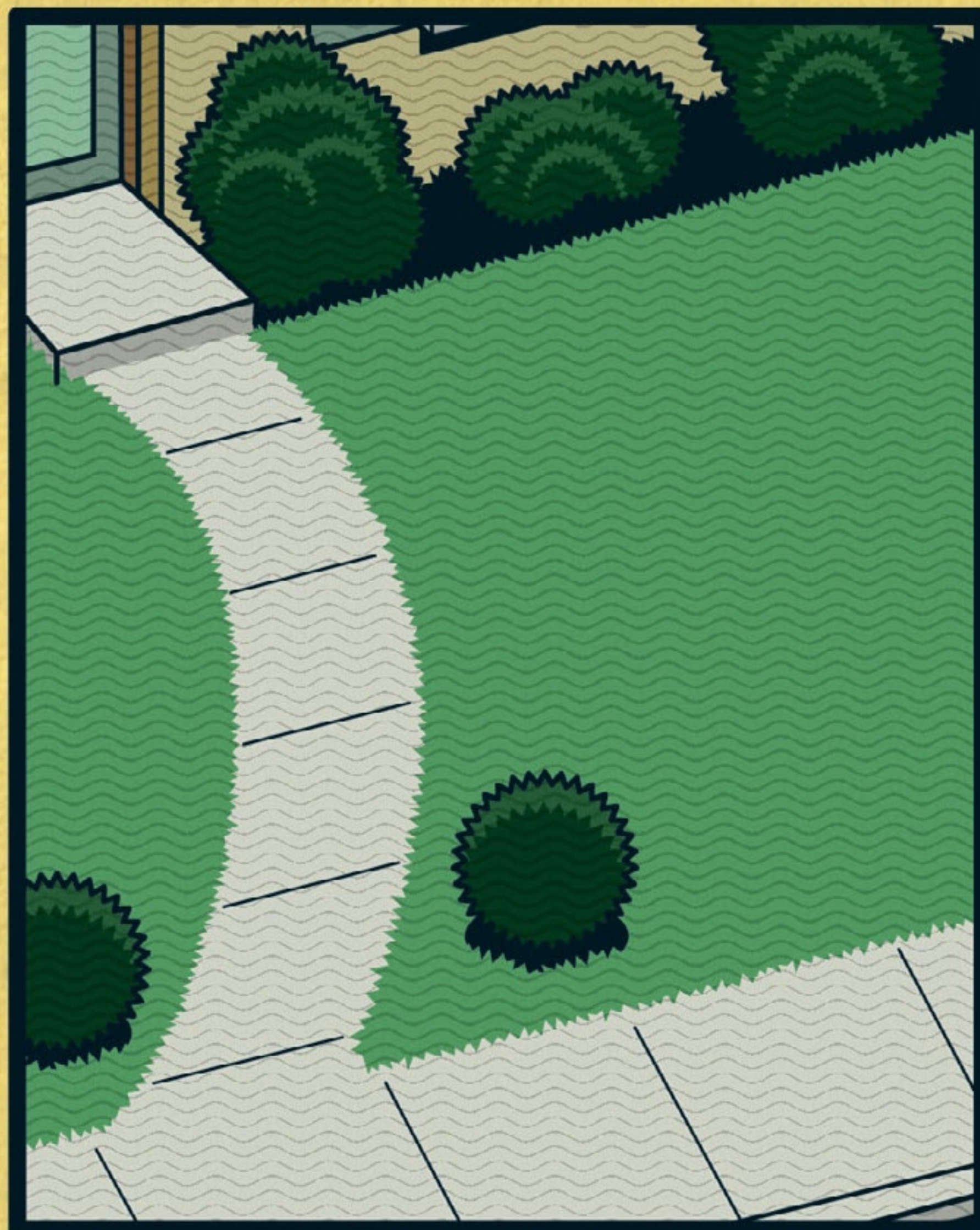
HE KNEW SHE'D HAVE NO CLUE AS TO WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO HER WORLD.







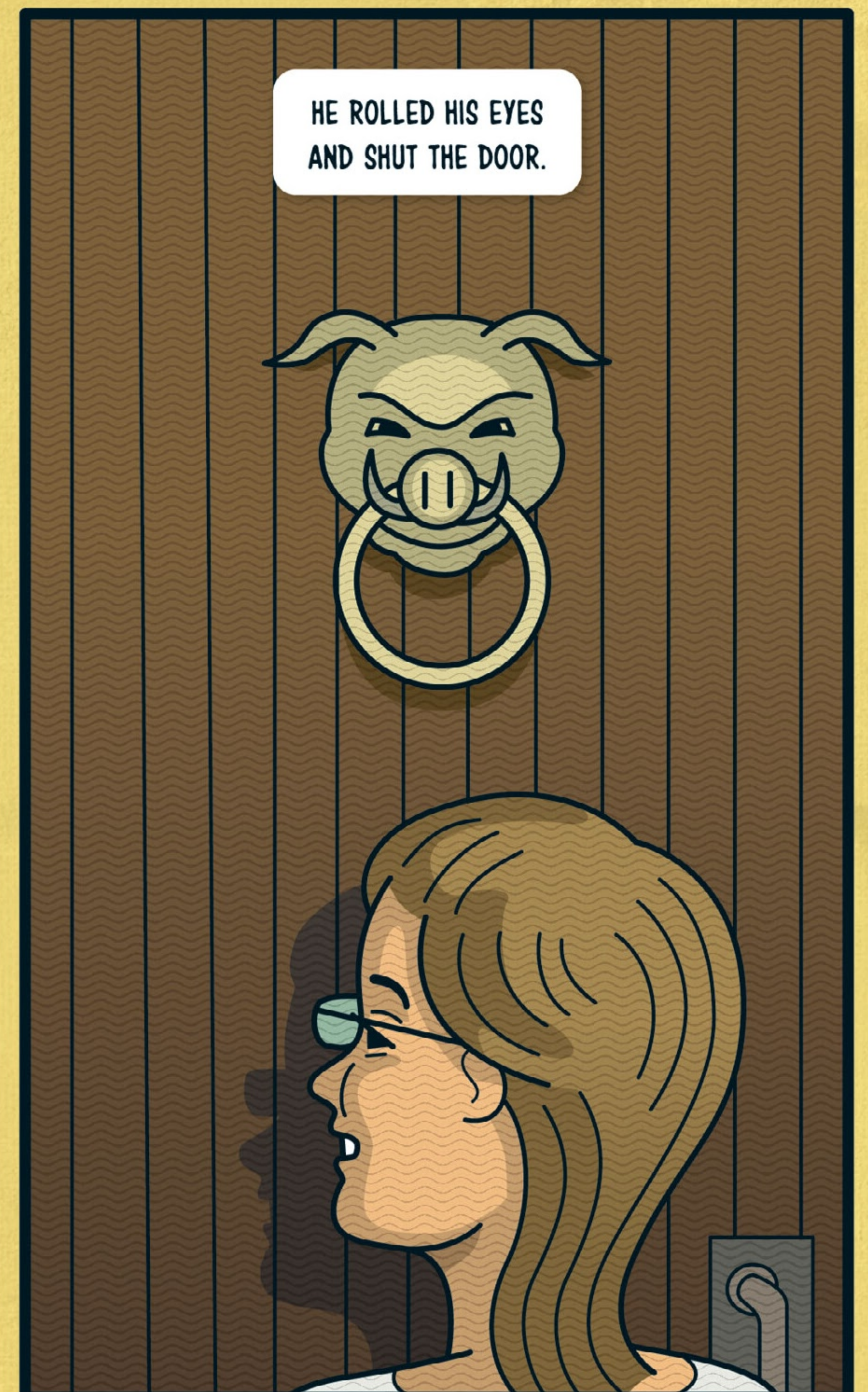
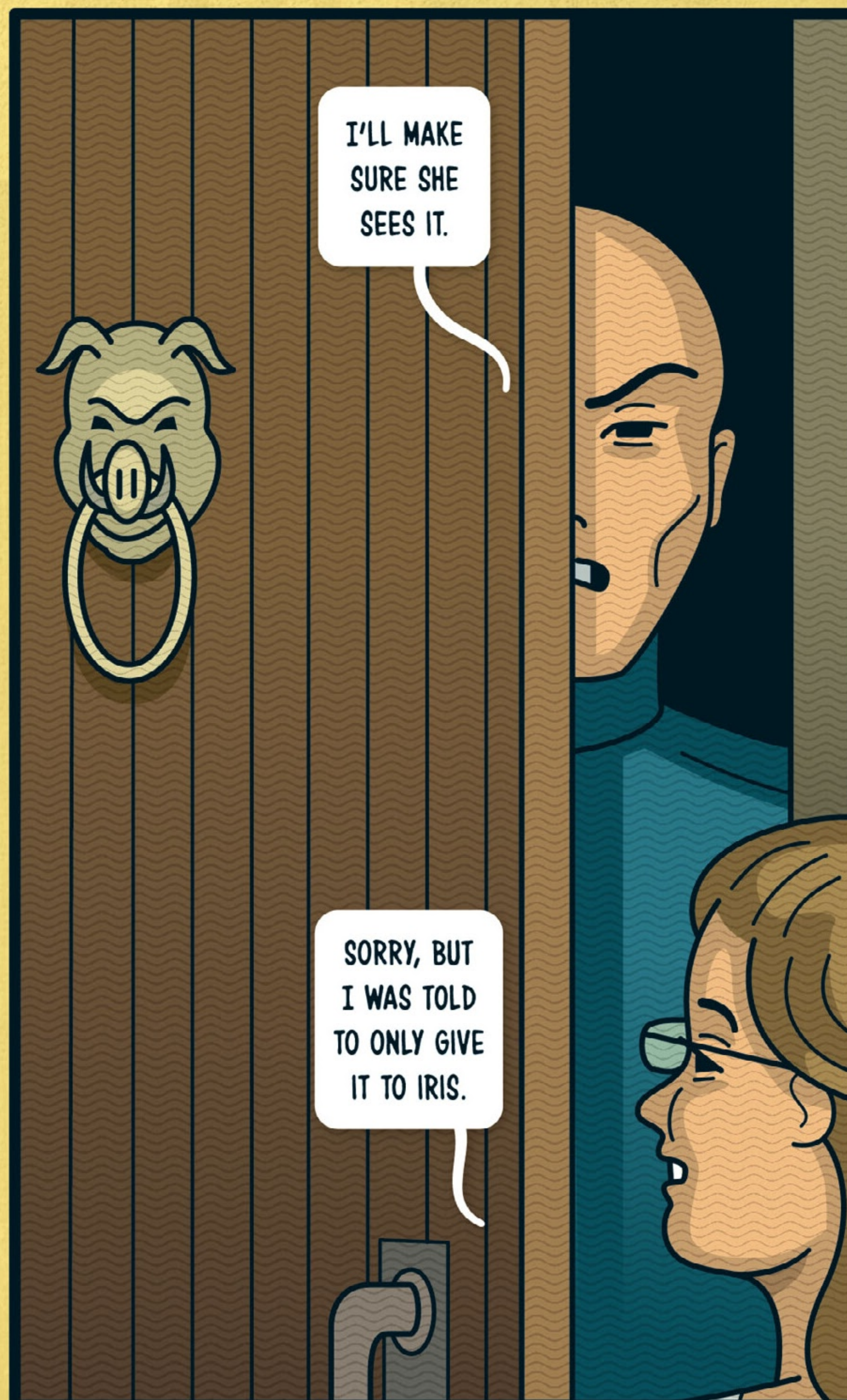
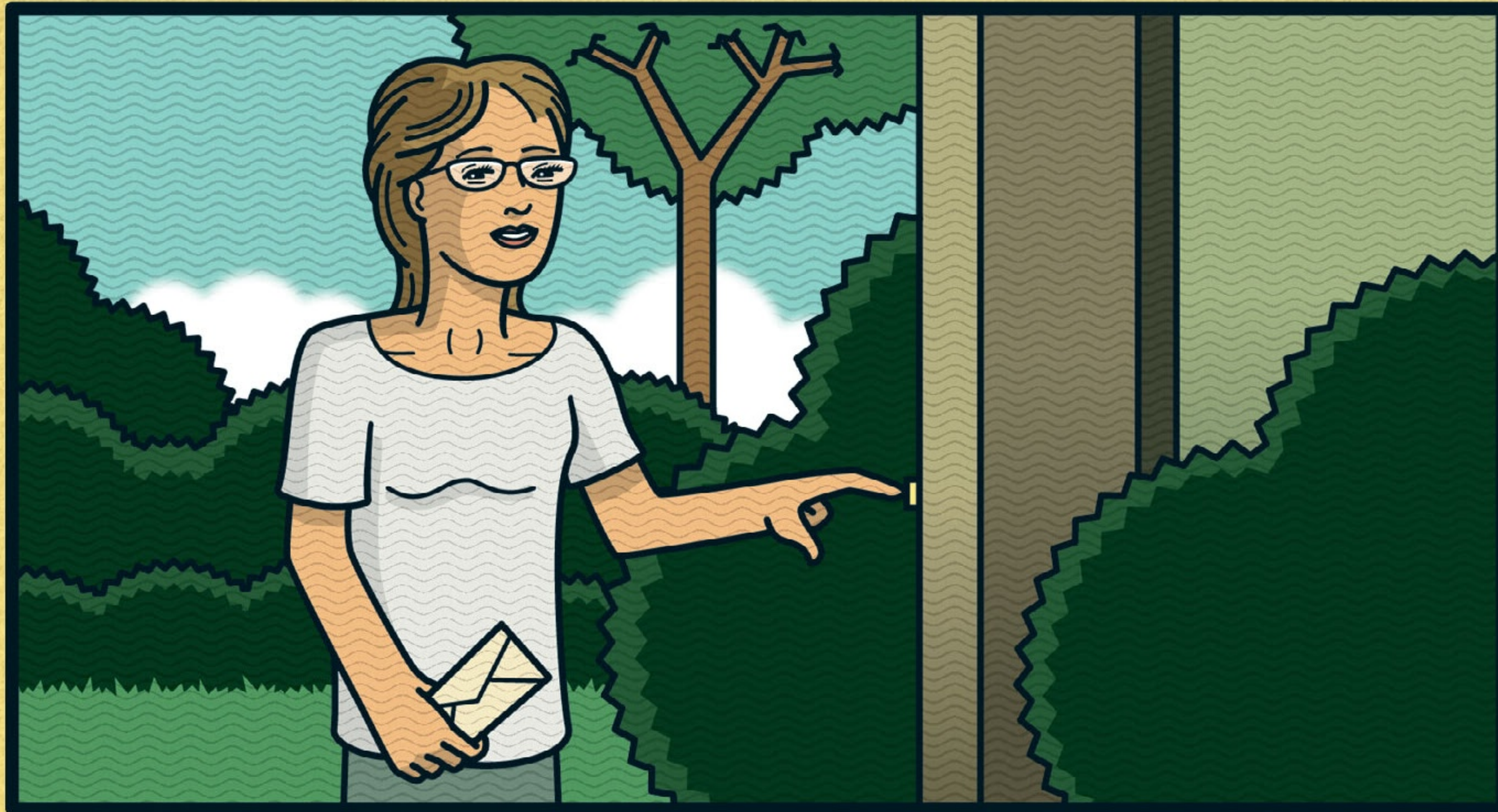
HER WALK UP
NORTH ALPINE DRIVE
WAS STEEP, AND
SHE COULD FEEL
THE SWEAT
RUNNING DOWN
HER BACK.

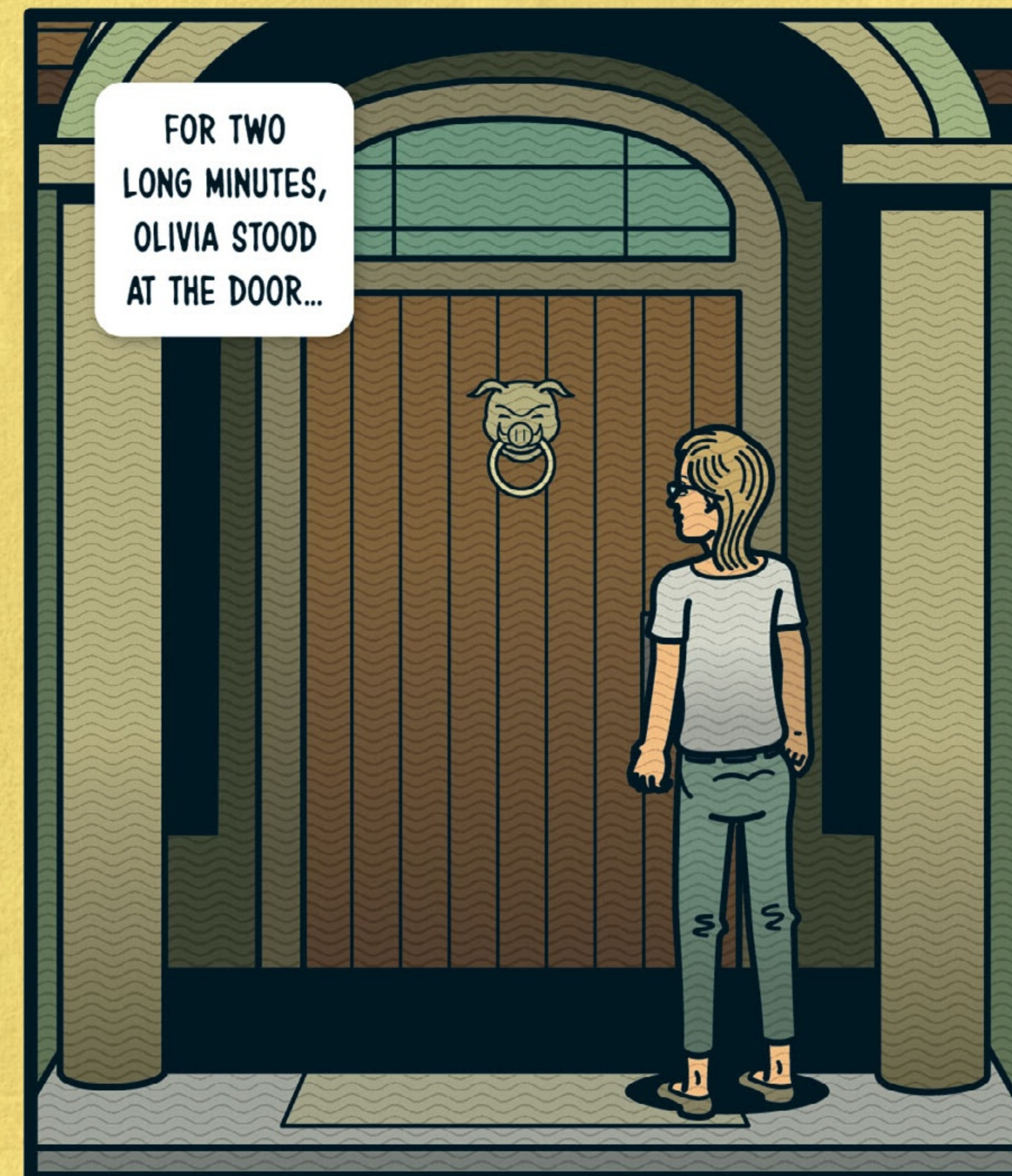


THE STREET WOUND
BACK AND FORTH,
BUT MOSTLY IT
WENT UP.



WHEN SHE FINALLY
REACHED THE HOUSE,
SHE WAS DISAPPOINTED
TO SEE HOW ORDINARY
IT WAS.





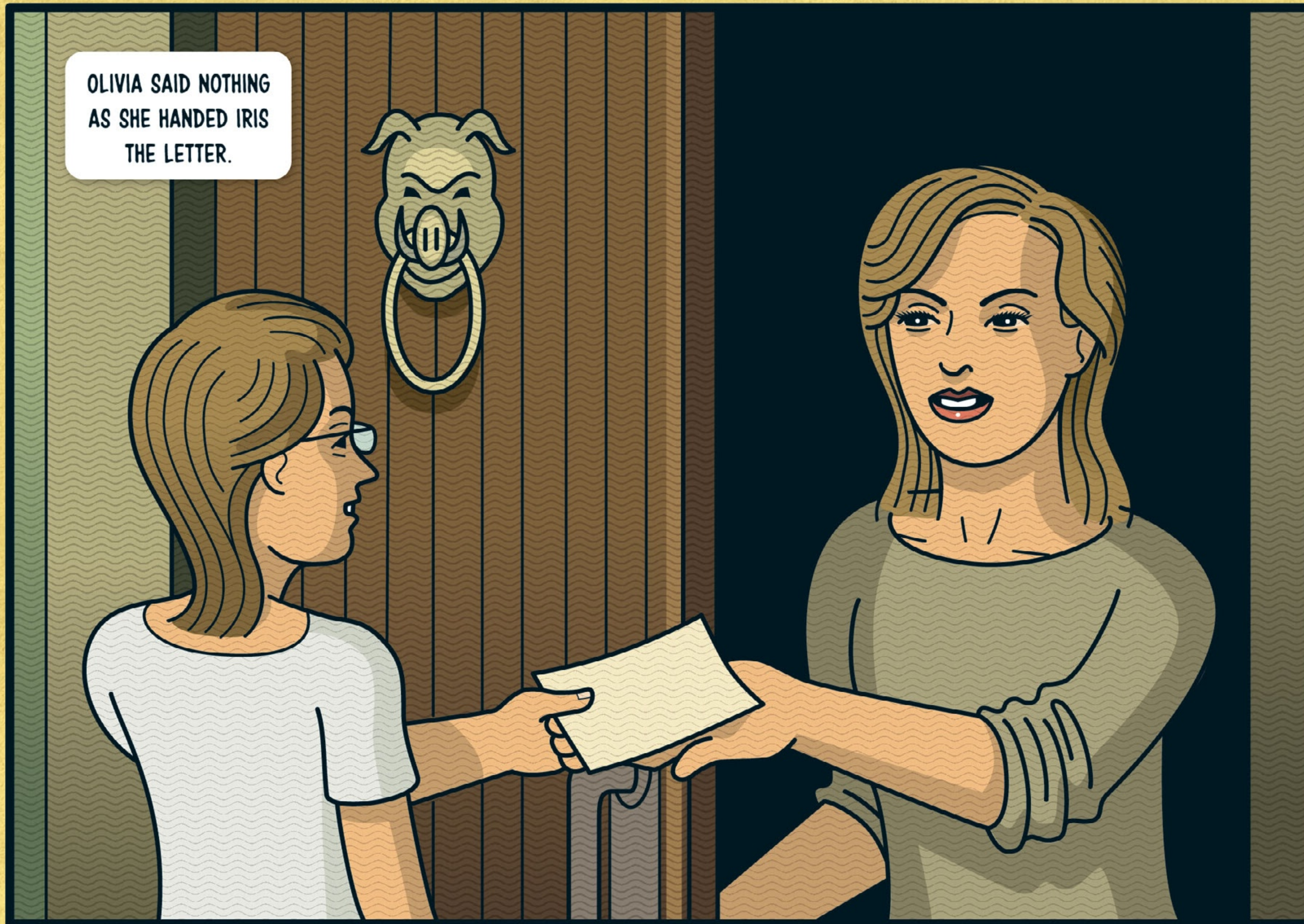
FOR TWO
LONG MINUTES,
OLIVIA STOOD
AT THE DOOR...



...UNTIL IT
SWEPT OPEN
ONCE AGAIN.



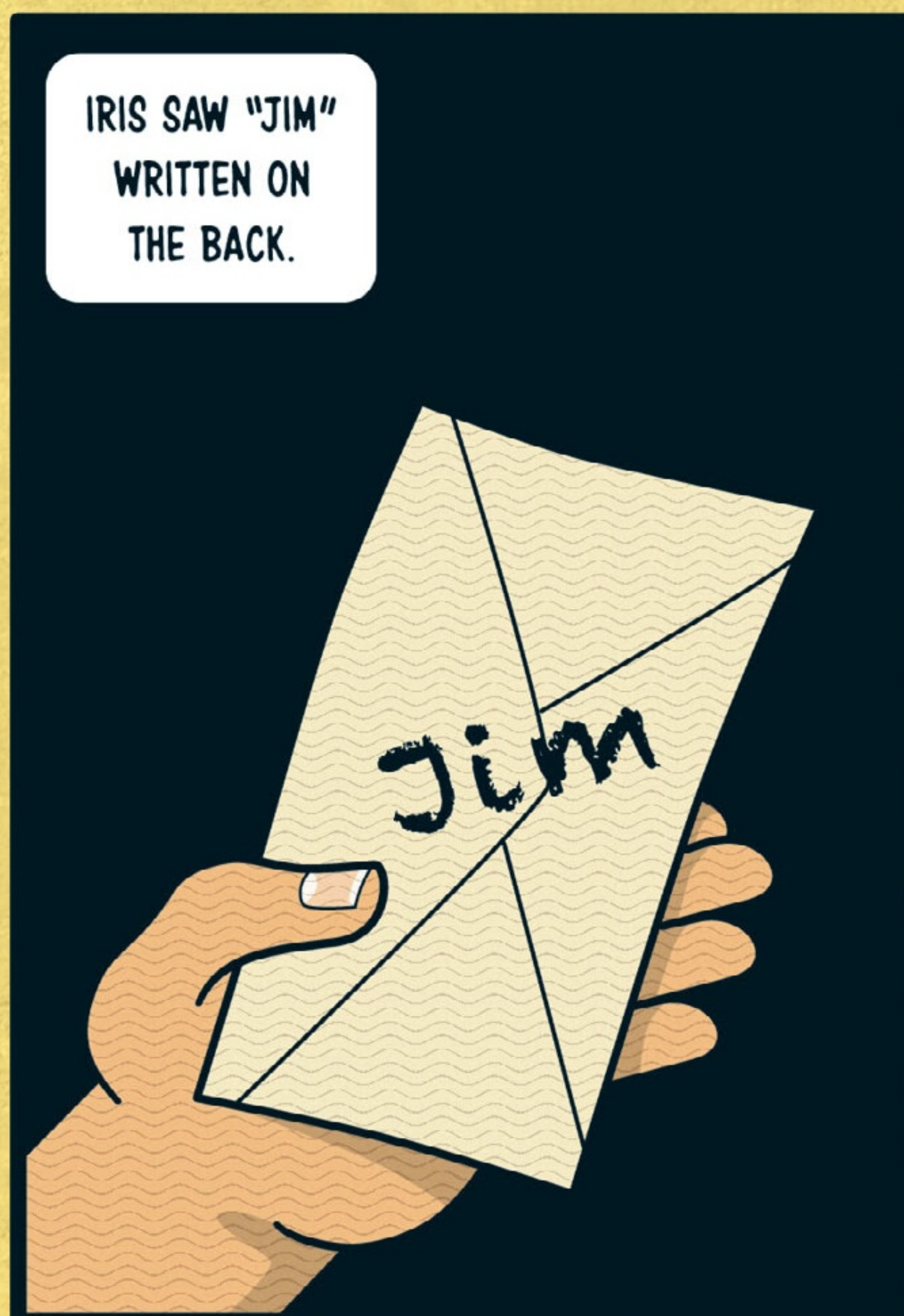
SO, YOU HAVE SOMETHING
FOR ME AND ME ALONE?



OLIVIA SAID NOTHING
AS SHE HANDED IRIS
THE LETTER.

IRIS LOOKED
AT THE ENVELOPE
AND SNEERED.

DID EDDIE PUT
YOU UP TO THIS?



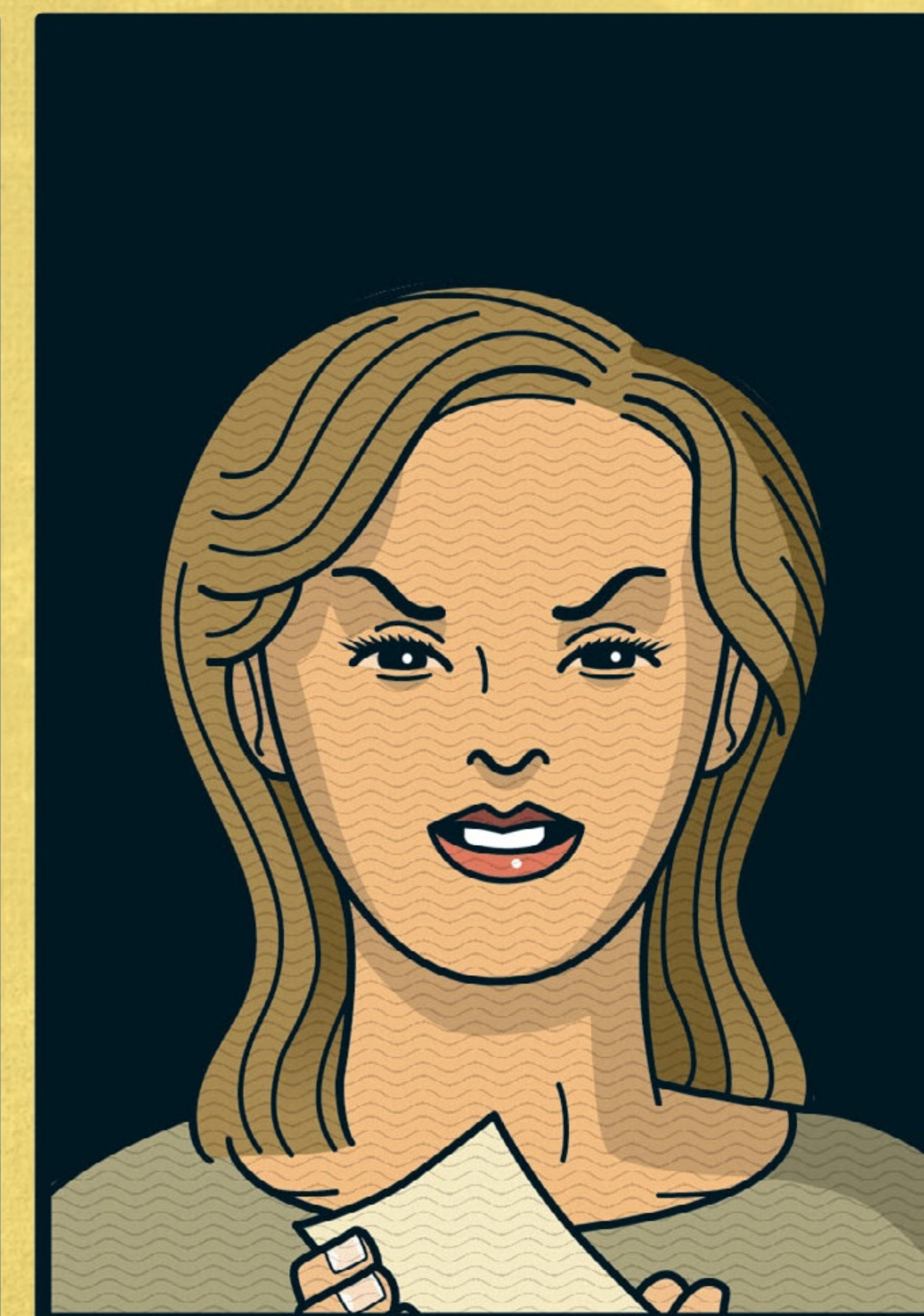
IRIS SAW "JIM"
WRITTEN ON
THE BACK.



JIM? YOU GOT
THIS FROM JIM?

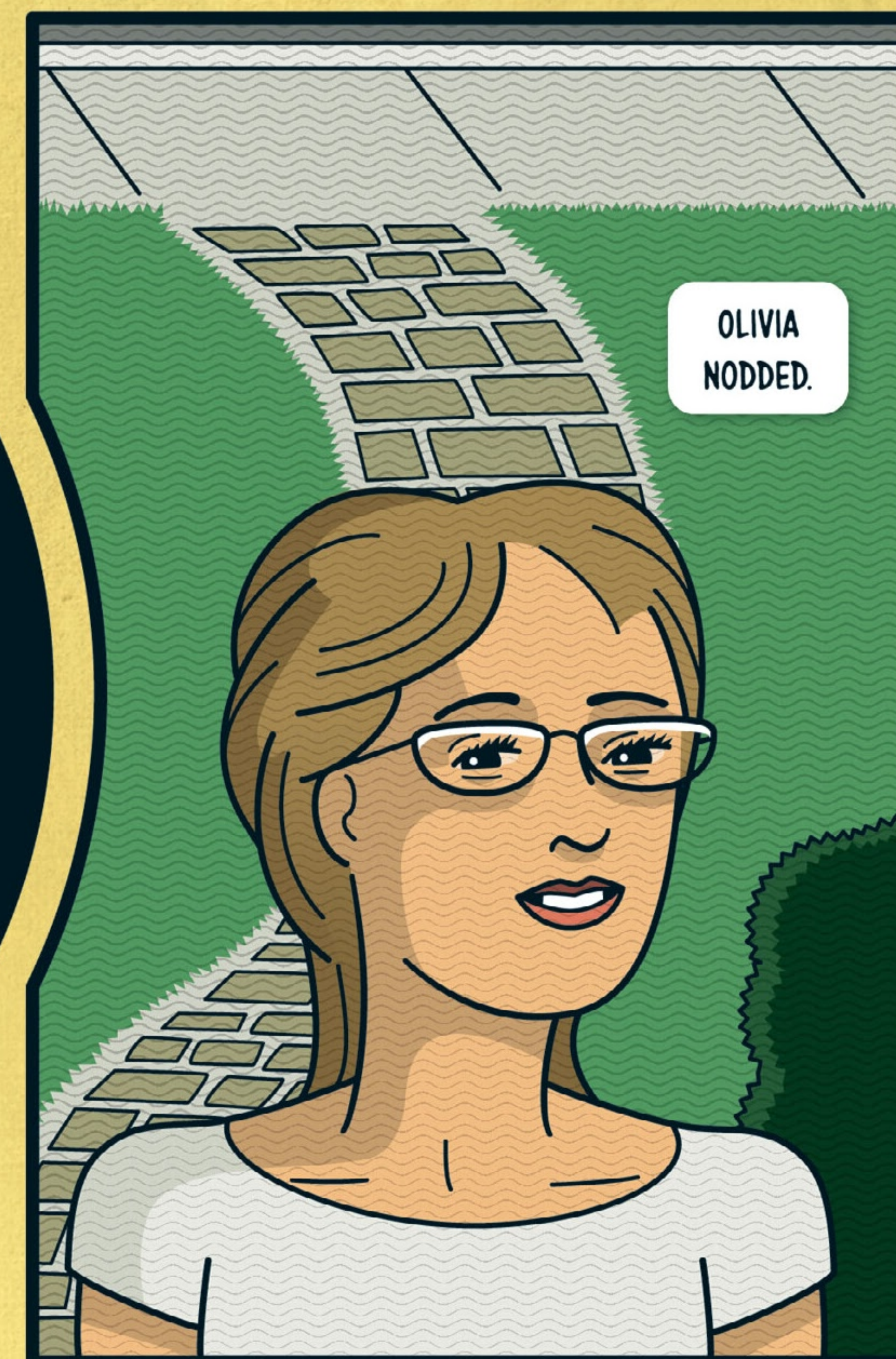


HE WAS IN THE PARK WHEN I HAD MY ATTACK...
THAT'S WHERE HE SLIPPED ME THE LETTER.





FOUR
\$500 BILLS
SLID OUT
INTO HER HAND.



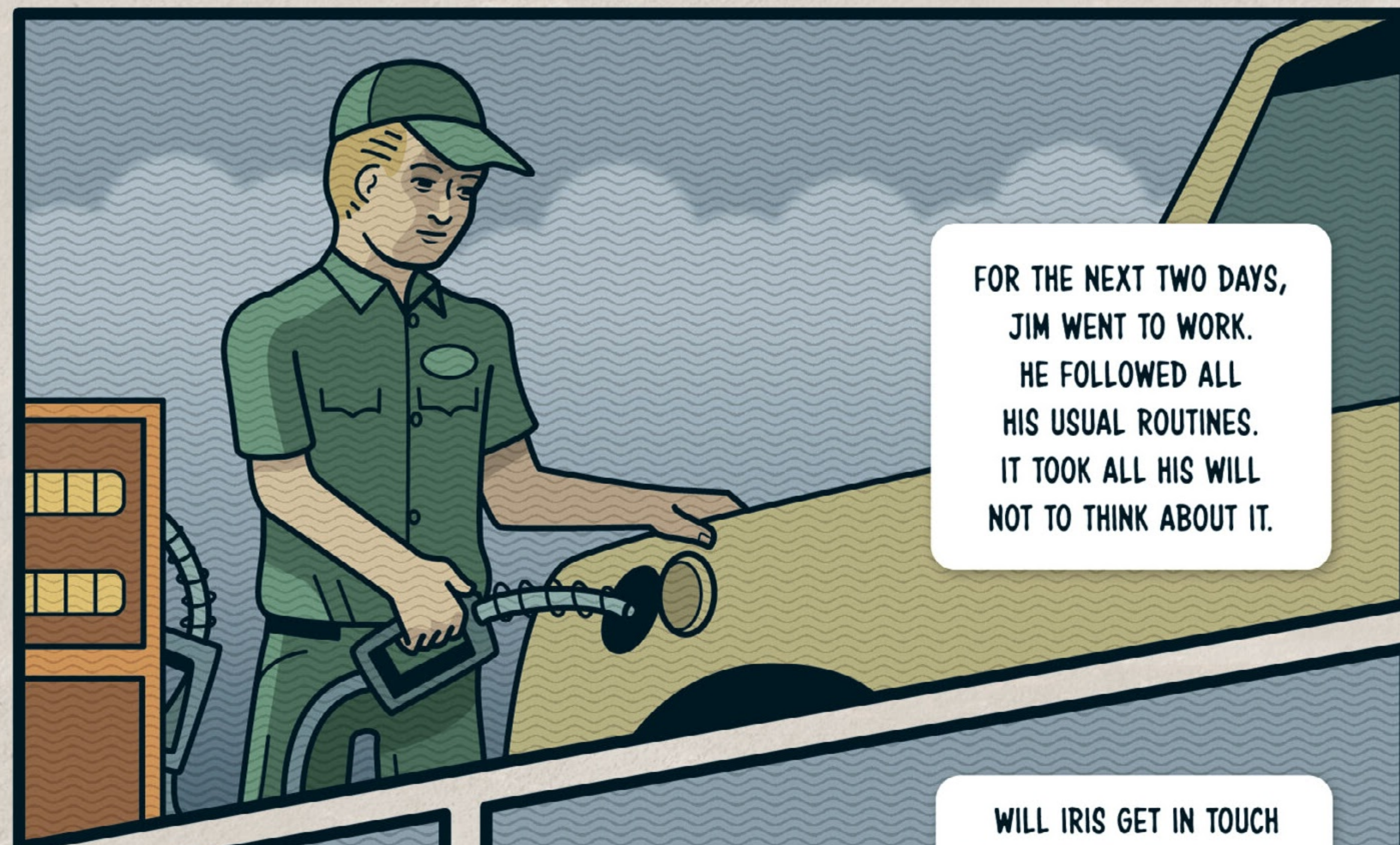
SMART GIRL.

COME IN, YOU
MUST BE THIRSTY.
LET ME HAVE
BRYAN GET US
SOMETHING COOL
TO DRINK.

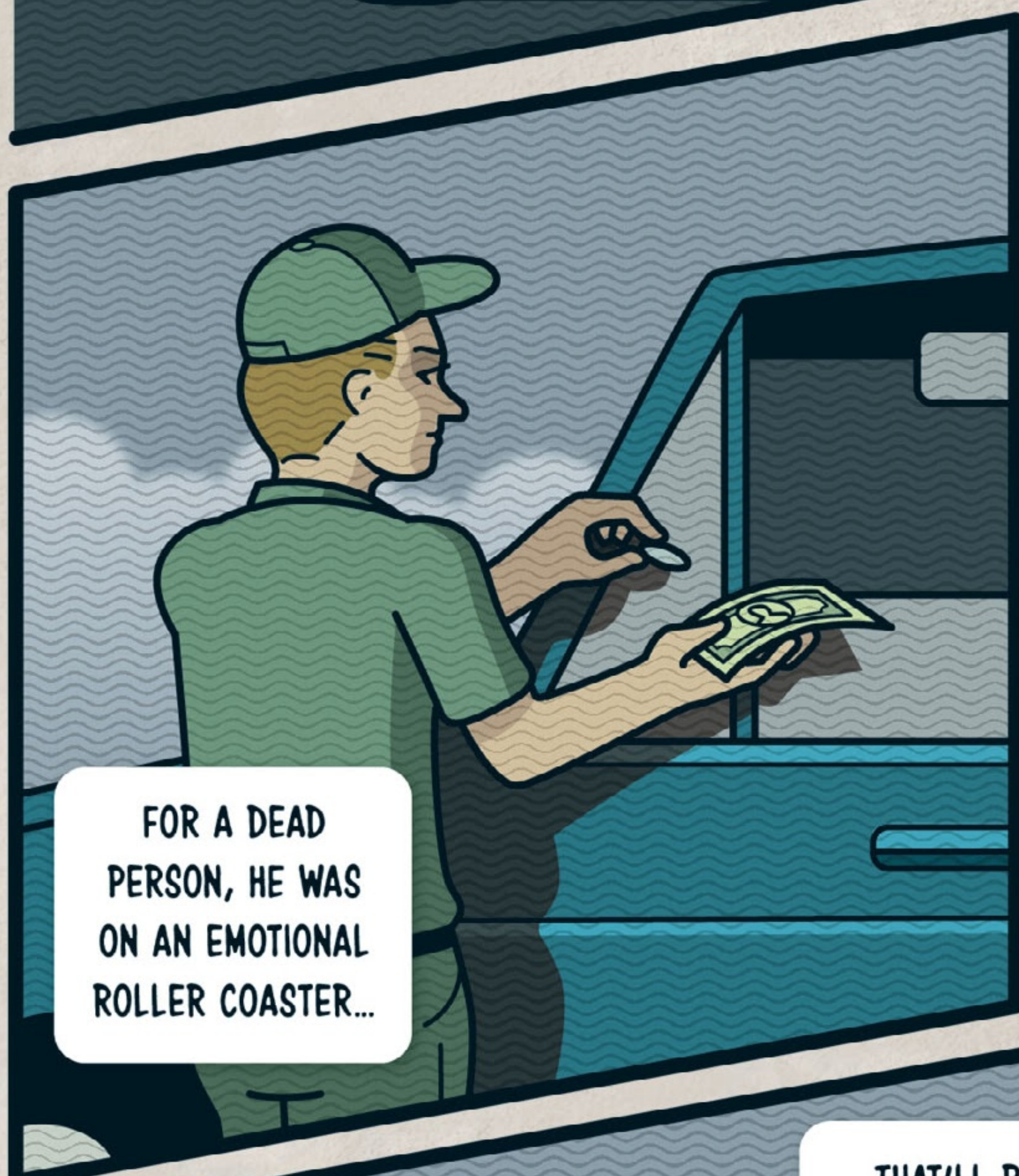
OH, BRY-AN,
WE'RE GOING
TO NEED
SOME DRINKS
IN THE
LIBRARY.

SHE LOOKED
AT OLIVIA
AND SMILED
AGAIN.

IRIS CLOSED THE
DOOR BEHIND HER.



FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS,
JIM WENT TO WORK.
HE FOLLOWED ALL
HIS USUAL ROUTINES.
IT TOOK ALL HIS WILL
NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.



FOR A DEAD
PERSON, HE WAS
ON AN EMOTIONAL
ROLLER COASTER...



...HE WAS ANXIOUS
WITH A STRONG
SENSE OF BOTH
EXPECTATION
AND DREAD.



WILL IRIS GET IN TOUCH
WITH EDDIE? OR WOULD SHE
DO IT THROUGH OLIVIA?



DING!

THAT'LL BE
SEVEN DOLLARS,
MISTER.



WE'LL BE
BY YOUR
PLACE
AT 8 P.M.
BE THERE.

RAYMOND
LOOKED UP
AT JIM, A
SMIRK ON
HIS FACE.

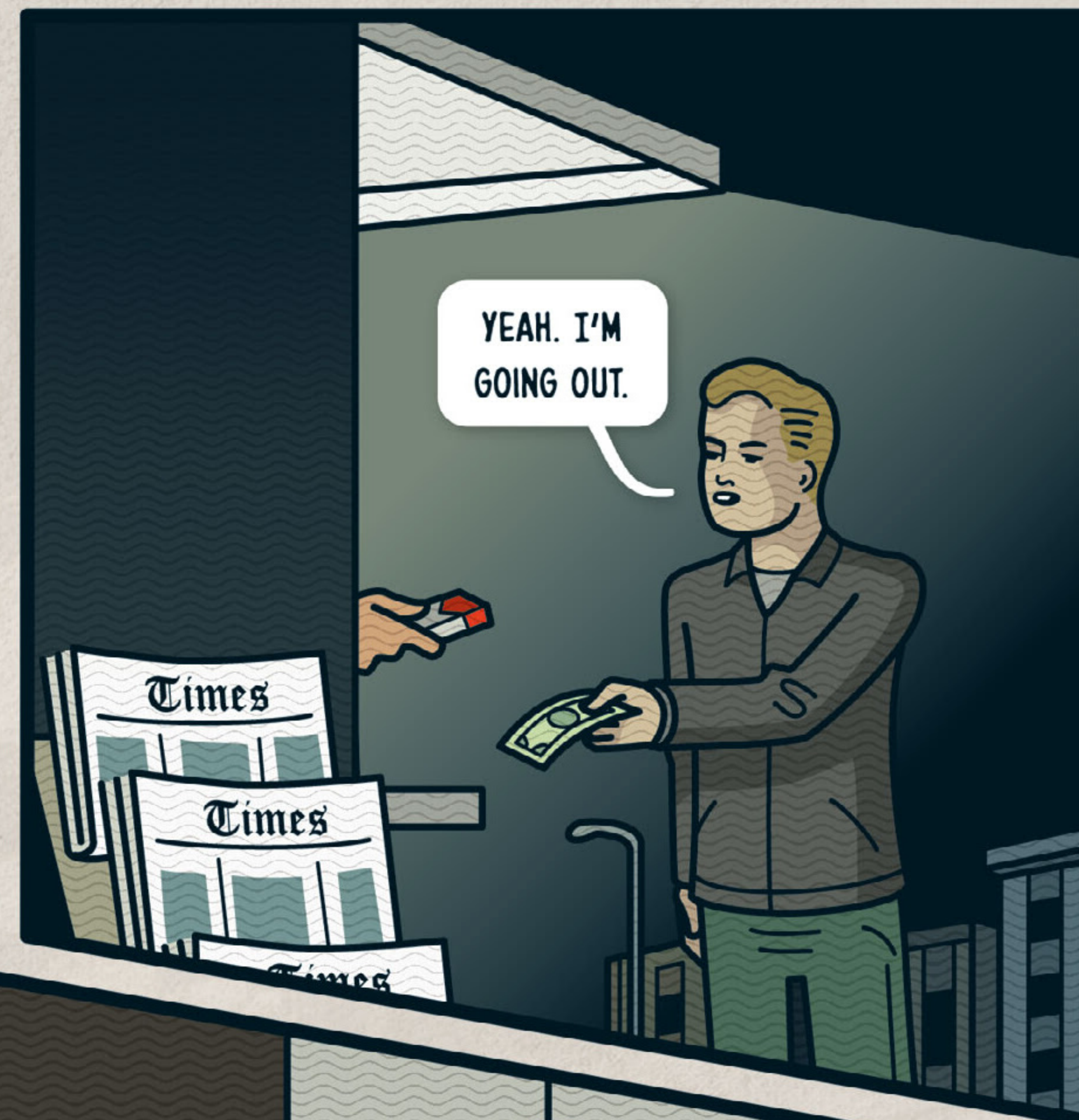


HE LEFT AT 5 P.M.
THE TRAFFIC WAS BAD,
LIKE IT ALWAYS WAS.



HE GOT A PACK
OF CIGARETTES.

NO PAPER
TONIGHT?
GOING OUT?



YEAH. I'M
GOING OUT.



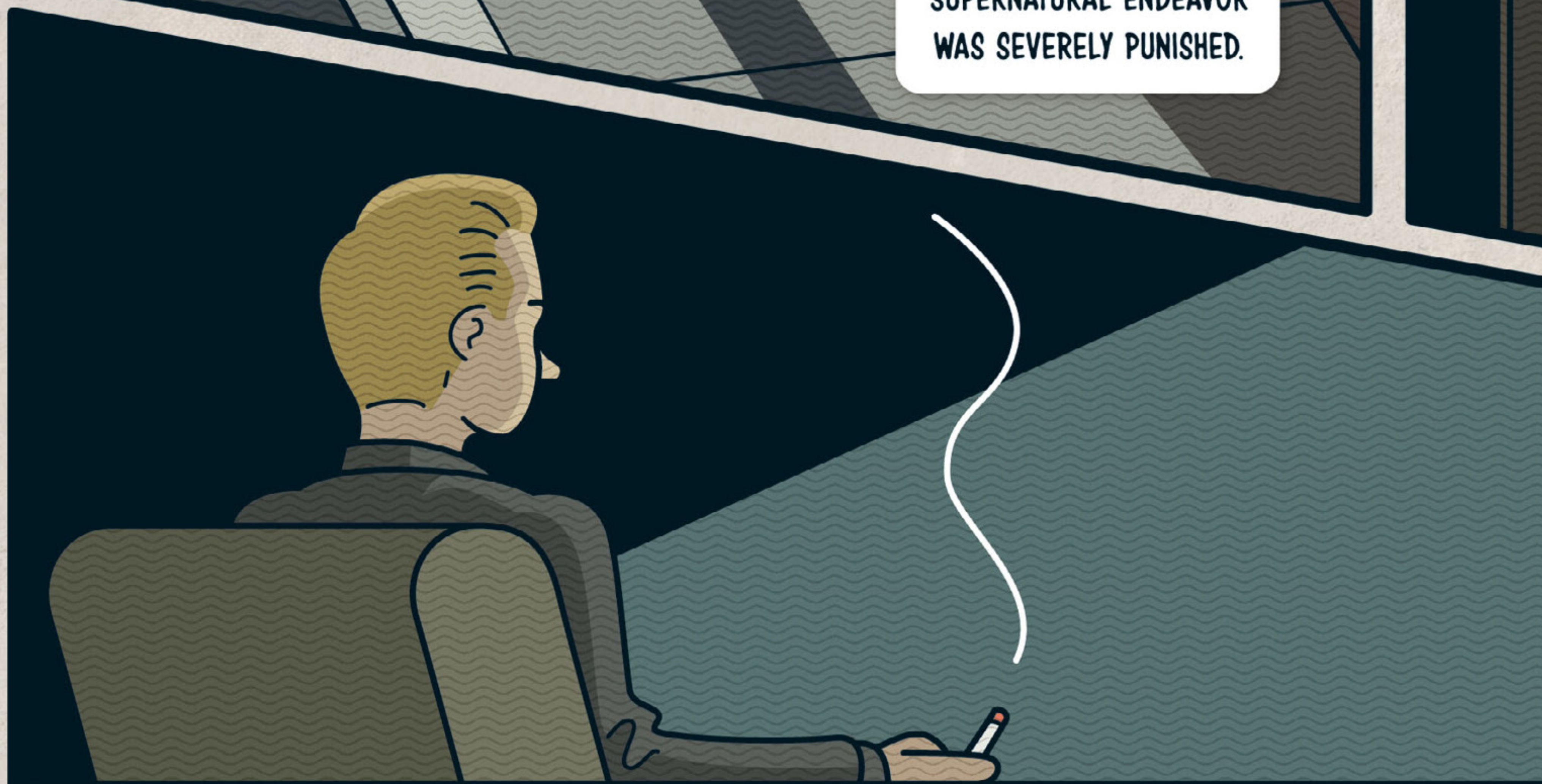
HE KNEW HE HAD
NO CHOICE. RAYMOND
AND EDDIE WOULD
PICK HIM UP AT EIGHT
AND THERE'D BE
ANOTHER SÉANCE...

...MAYBE AT THE SAME HOUSE,
MAYBE SOMEWHERE ELSE.
IT WAS A DANGEROUS LINE
OF WORK IN THE A.I. AND
YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL...

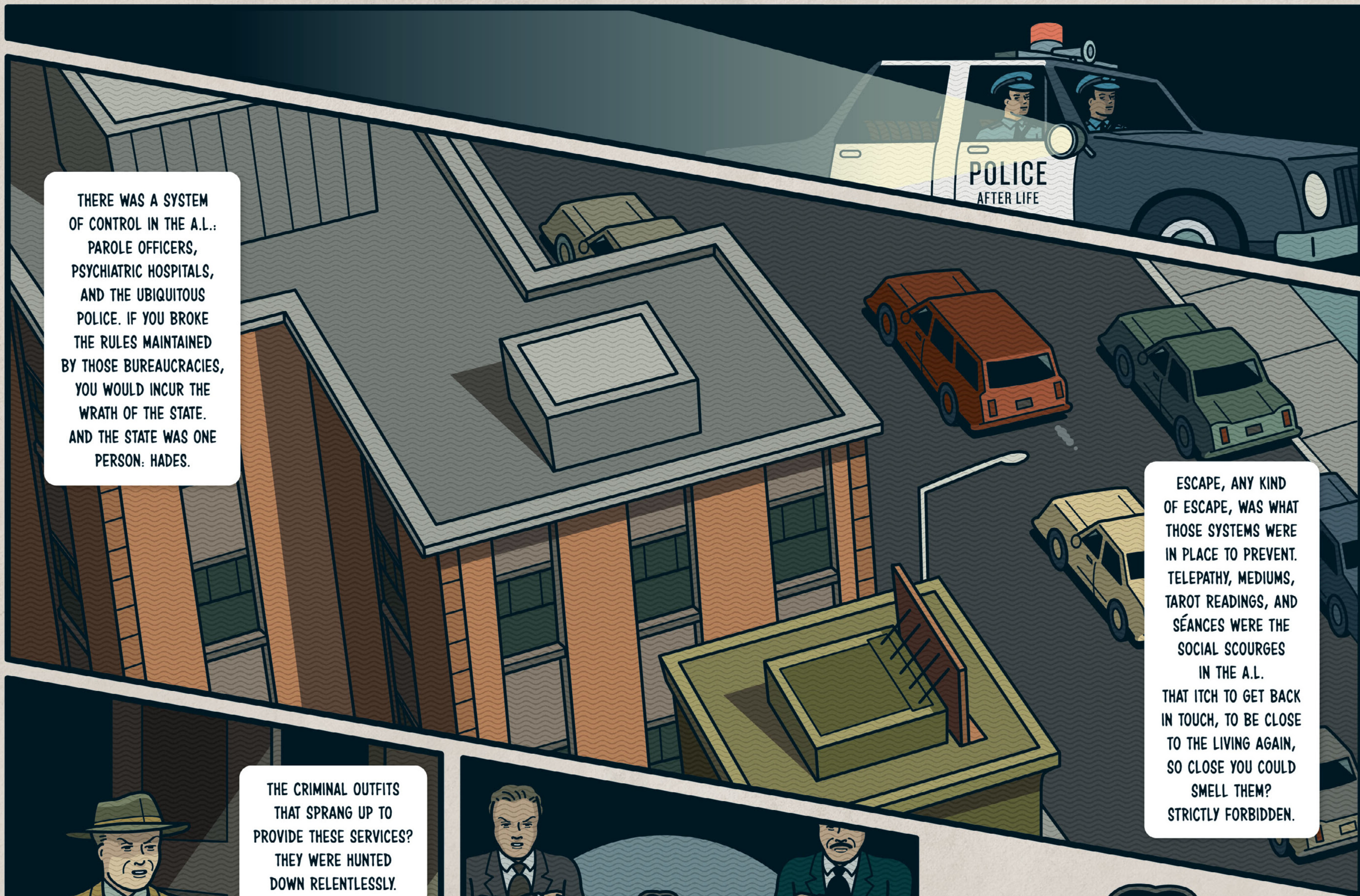
...BECAUSE ANY KIND OF
SUPERNATURAL ENDEAVOR
WAS SEVERELY PUNISHED.



JIM WALKED
THROUGH THE
LOBBY AND
WENT UPSTAIRS.
HE DIDN'T BOTHER
WITH THE MAIL.



HE STUDIED THE SHADOW
ON THE WALL AND THOUGHT
ABOUT WHAT MIGHT
HAPPEN TONIGHT.



THERE WAS A SYSTEM OF CONTROL IN THE A.L.: PAROLE OFFICERS, PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS, AND THE UBIQUITOUS POLICE. IF YOU BROKE THE RULES MAINTAINED BY THOSE BUREAUCRACIES, YOU WOULD INCUR THE WRATH OF THE STATE. AND THE STATE WAS ONE PERSON: HADES.

ESCAPE, ANY KIND OF ESCAPE, WAS WHAT THOSE SYSTEMS WERE IN PLACE TO PREVENT. TELEPATHY, MEDIUMS, TAROT READINGS, AND SÉANCES WERE THE SOCIAL SCOURGES IN THE A.L. THAT ITCH TO GET BACK IN TOUCH, TO BE CLOSE TO THE LIVING AGAIN, SO CLOSE YOU COULD SMELL THEM? STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.



THE CRIMINAL OUTFITS THAT SPRANG UP TO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES? THEY WERE HUNTED DOWN RELENTLESSLY.



THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY PERSISTED. THERE WERE ALWAYS PEOPLE WHO WOULD PAY HANDSOMELY FOR THOSE SERVICES.



PEOPLE LIKE EDDIE.

BUT THERE WAS A HITCH.
YOU COULDN'T JUST ATTEND A
SÉANCE AND GET BACK IN TOUCH
WITH YOUR WIFE AND KIDS. YOU
HAD TO GO THROUGH SOMEONE.
AND NOT THE MEDIUM, WHO LED
THE SÉANCE, EITHER. THEY WERE
ONLY THERE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT.
IT HAD TO BE SOMEONE IN THE
CIRCLE WHO HAD A CONNECTION.



THE SAME WAS TRUE FOR THE
OTHER SIDE. A RANDOM PERSON,
LIVING THEIR LIFE, NOT KNOWING THEY
WERE A CONNECTION POINT TO THE A.L.
THEY WERE A VALUABLE COMMODITY,
TOO, AND SADLY, THEY WERE THE ONES
WITH THE MOST TO LOSE.

YOU WERE ALSO
A COMMODITY
THAT COULD BE
BOUGHT AND SOLD.

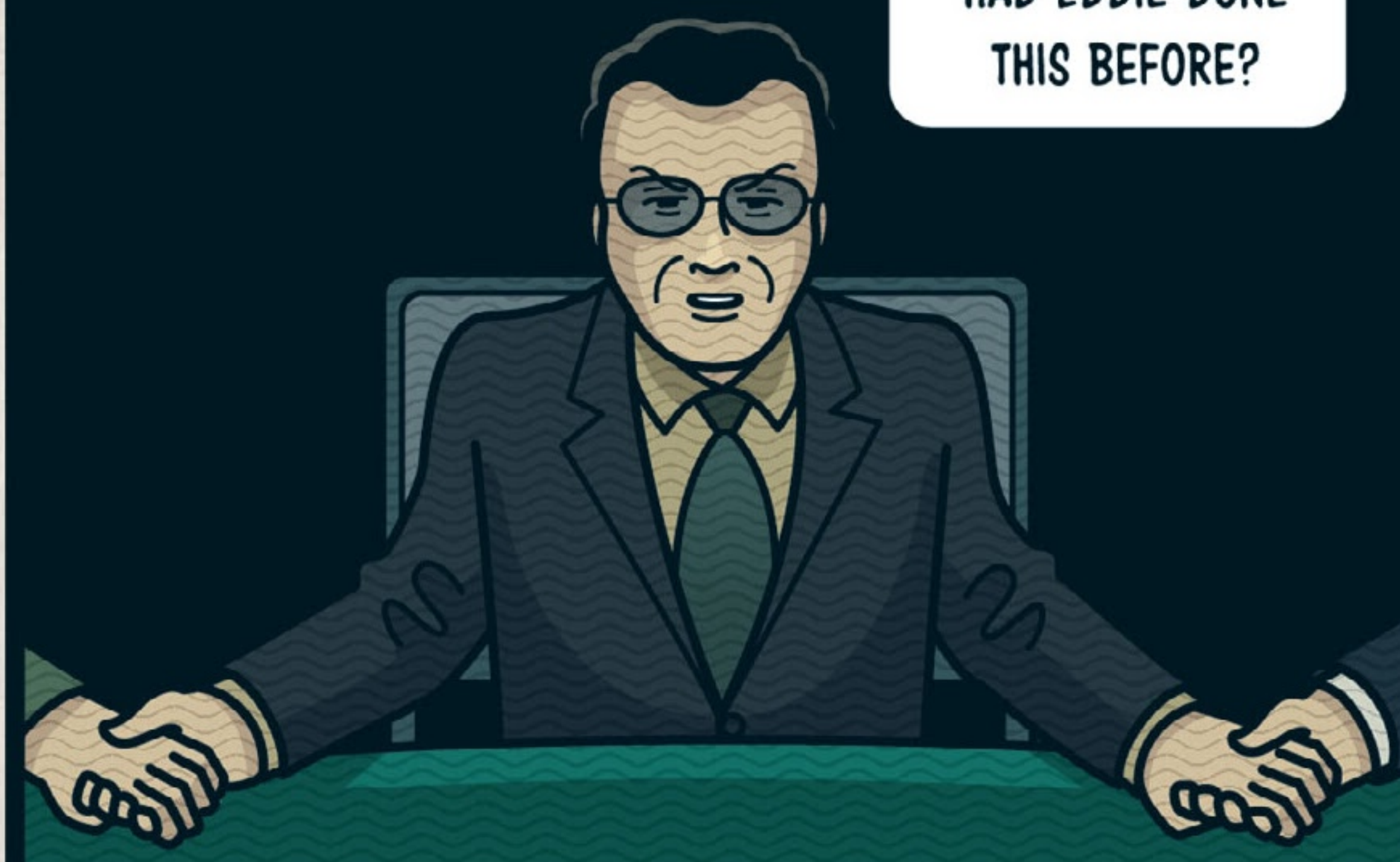
IT WAS LIKE HAVING
A RARE BLOOD TYPE.
YOU WERE PRECIOUS.
A CONNECTION POINT
BETWEEN ONE WORLD
AND ANOTHER.



OLIVIA JUST HAPPENED
TO BE THE FIRST ONE
HE SAW.



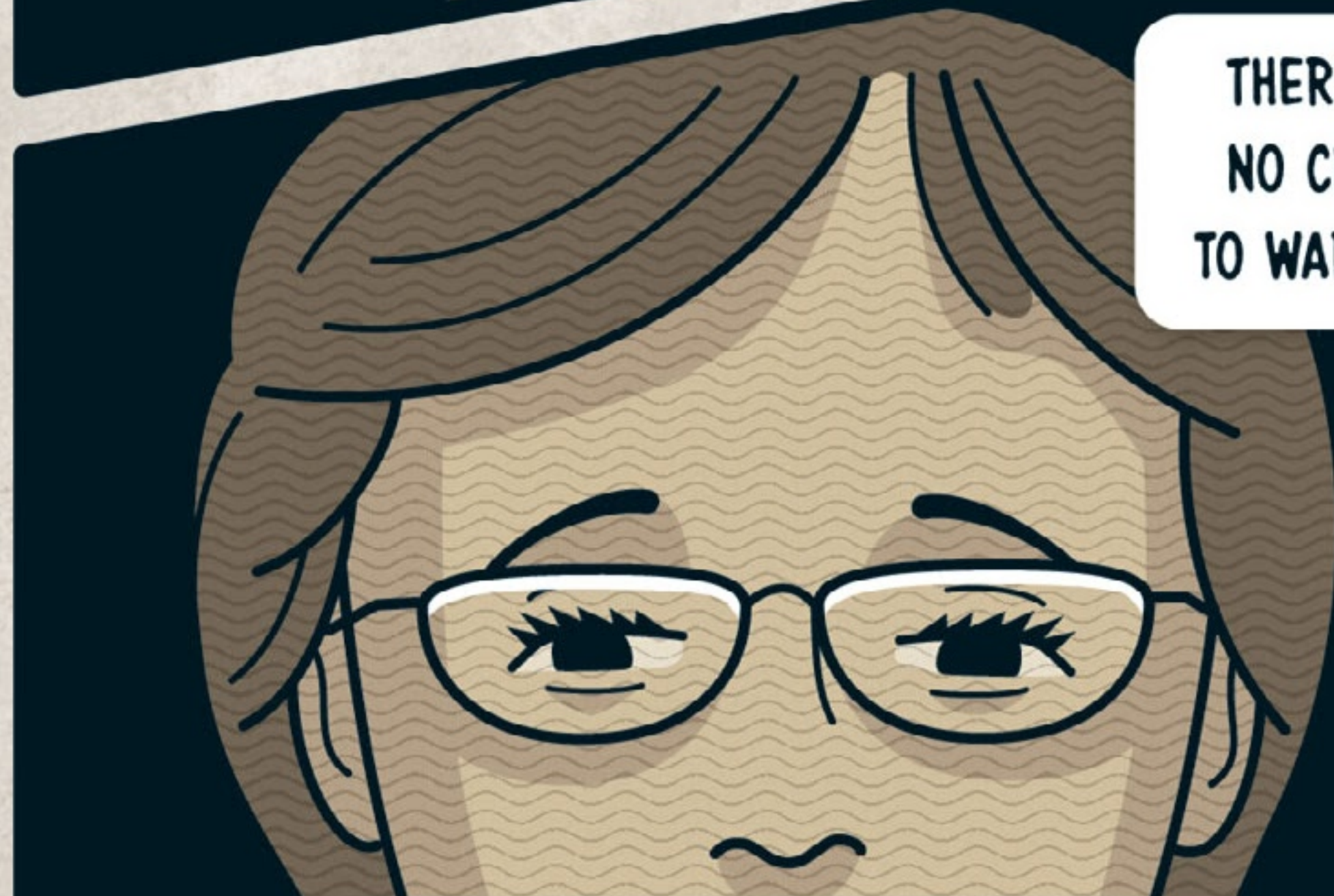
HOW MANY TIMES
HAD EDDIE DONE
THIS BEFORE?



AND WHAT
HAPPENED TO THE
THE OTHERS? IT
MUST NOT HAVE
GONE WELL OR
EDDIE WOULDN'T
HAVE COME
FOR HIM.



THERE WAS
NO CHANCE
TO WARN HER.

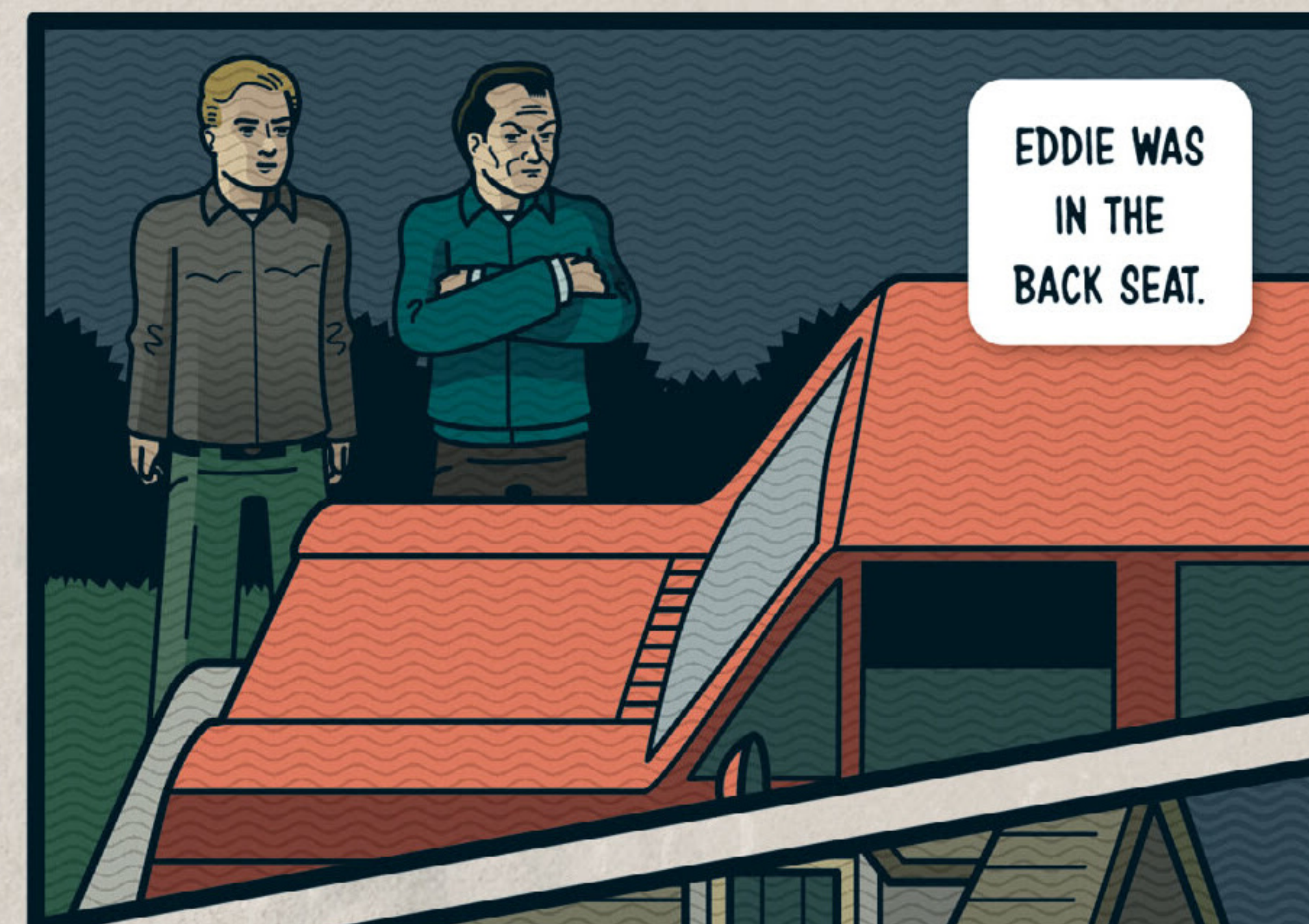




THERE WAS A QUIET KNOCK. SIGHING SLIGHTLY, HE STUBBED OUT HIS CIGARETTE, GOT UP, AND OPENED THE DOOR.



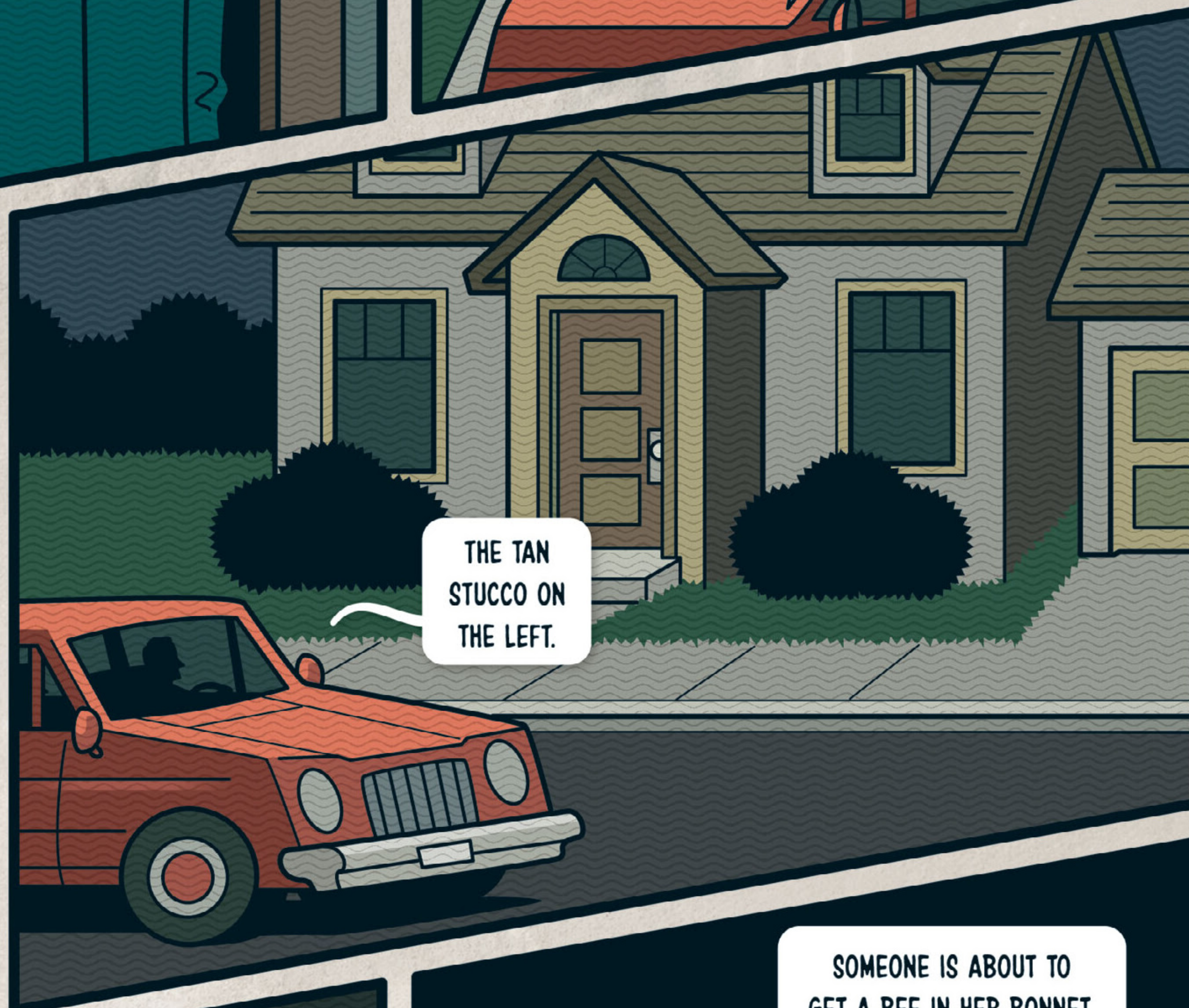
IT WAS RAYMOND.



EDDIE WAS IN THE BACK SEAT.



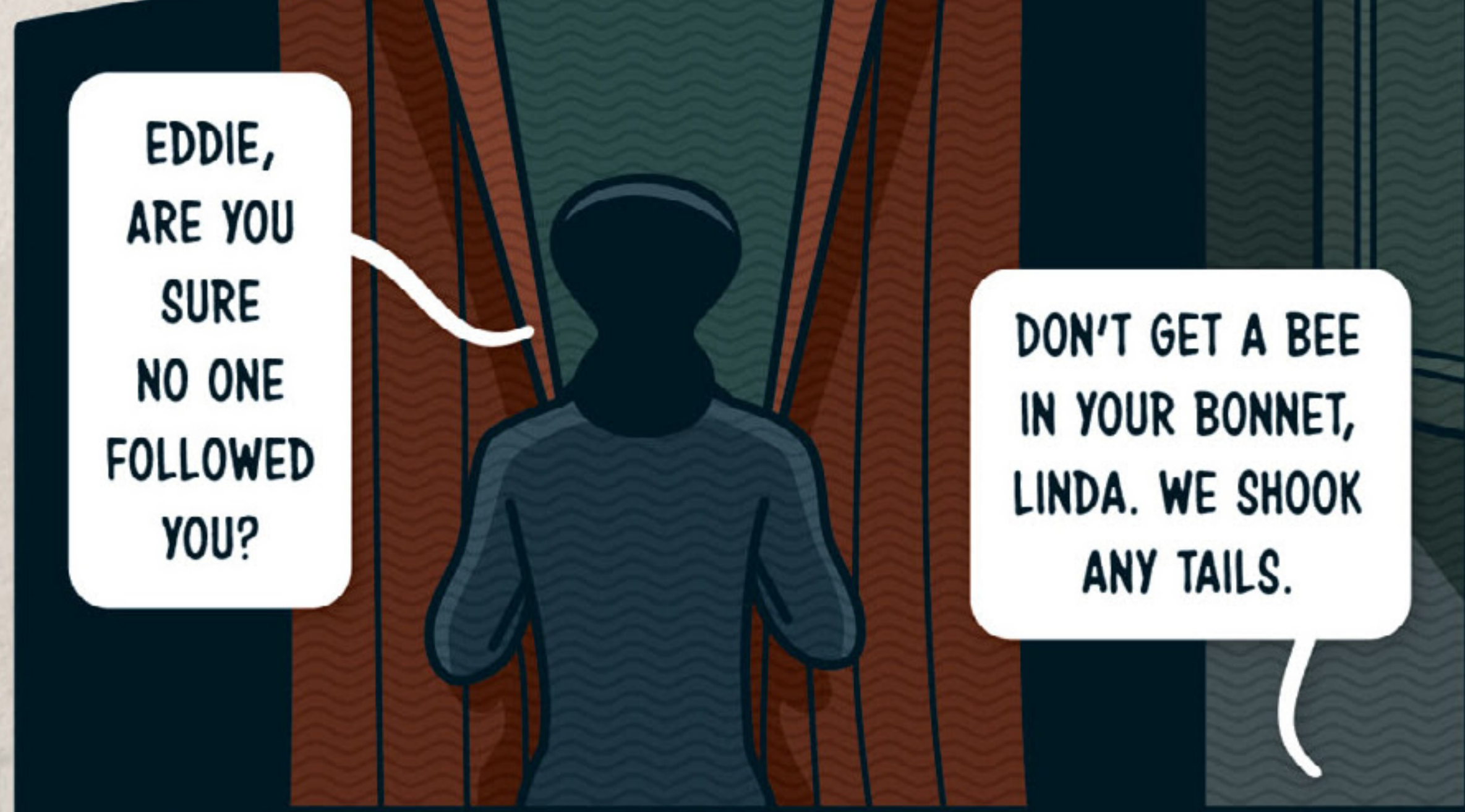
IN AN HOUR OR SO, THEY WERE ON A QUIET STREET IN WEST HOLLYWOOD.



THE TAN STUCCO ON THE LEFT.



LINDA APPEARED AT A SIDE DOOR. SHE HELD IT OPEN FOR THEM AND THEN QUICKLY PULLED IT SHUT.



EDDIE, ARE YOU SURE NO ONE FOLLOWED YOU?

DON'T GET A BEE IN YOUR BONNET, LINDA. WE SHOOK ANY TAILS.



SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO GET A BEE IN HER BONNET.



I'M STILL CRAZY ABOUT HER. TRYING TO FORGET DOES ME NO GOOD. EVEN IF I CAN'T SEE HER, I MIGHT STILL HAVE...INFLUENCE.



RAYMOND AND LINDA EXCHANGED LOOKS.



THE ONLY LIGHT IN THE ROOM WAS FROM THE CANDLES AND THE SMALL GLASS BALL IN THE CENTER OF THE TABLE.



EDDIE HANDED JIM A HEAVY MANILA ENVELOPE.

THIS GOES TO THE GIRL, JUST LIKE BEFORE.



ARE YOU SURE SHE'S GOING TO BE THERE?

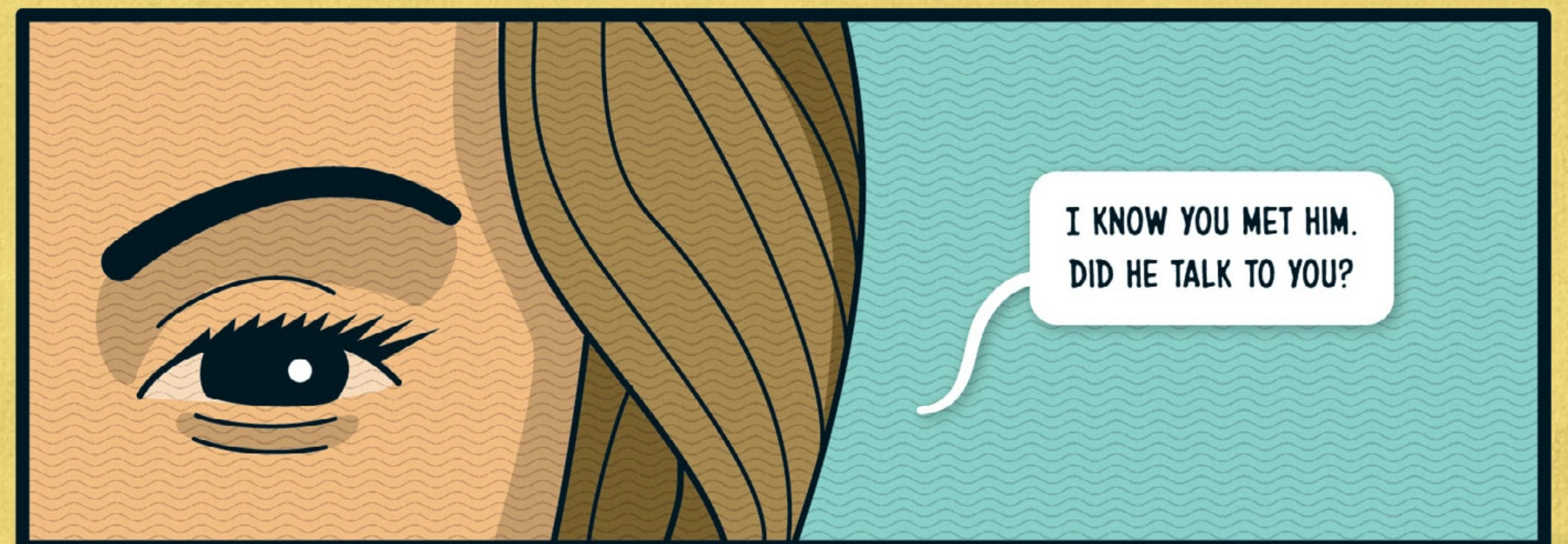
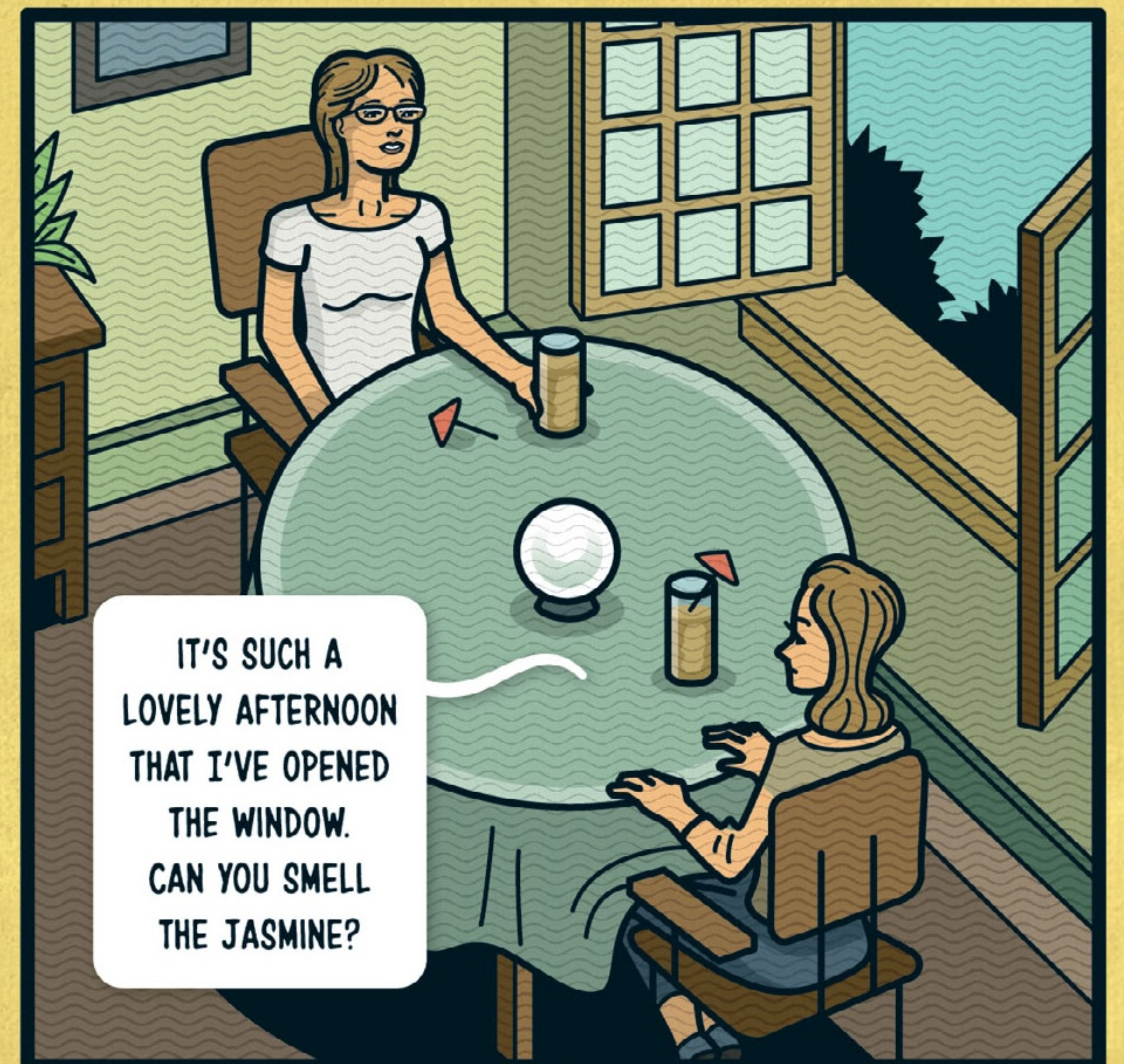
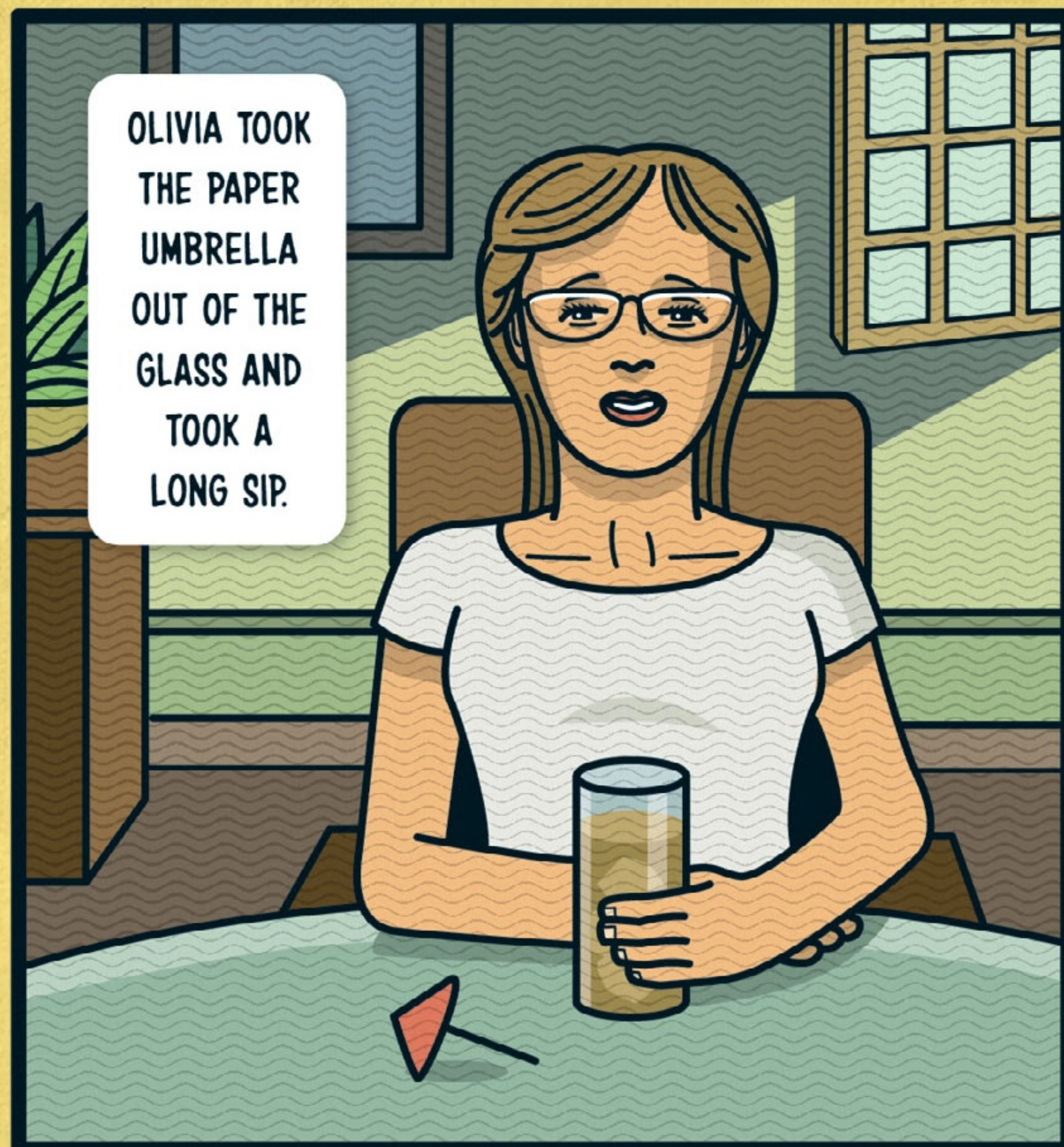


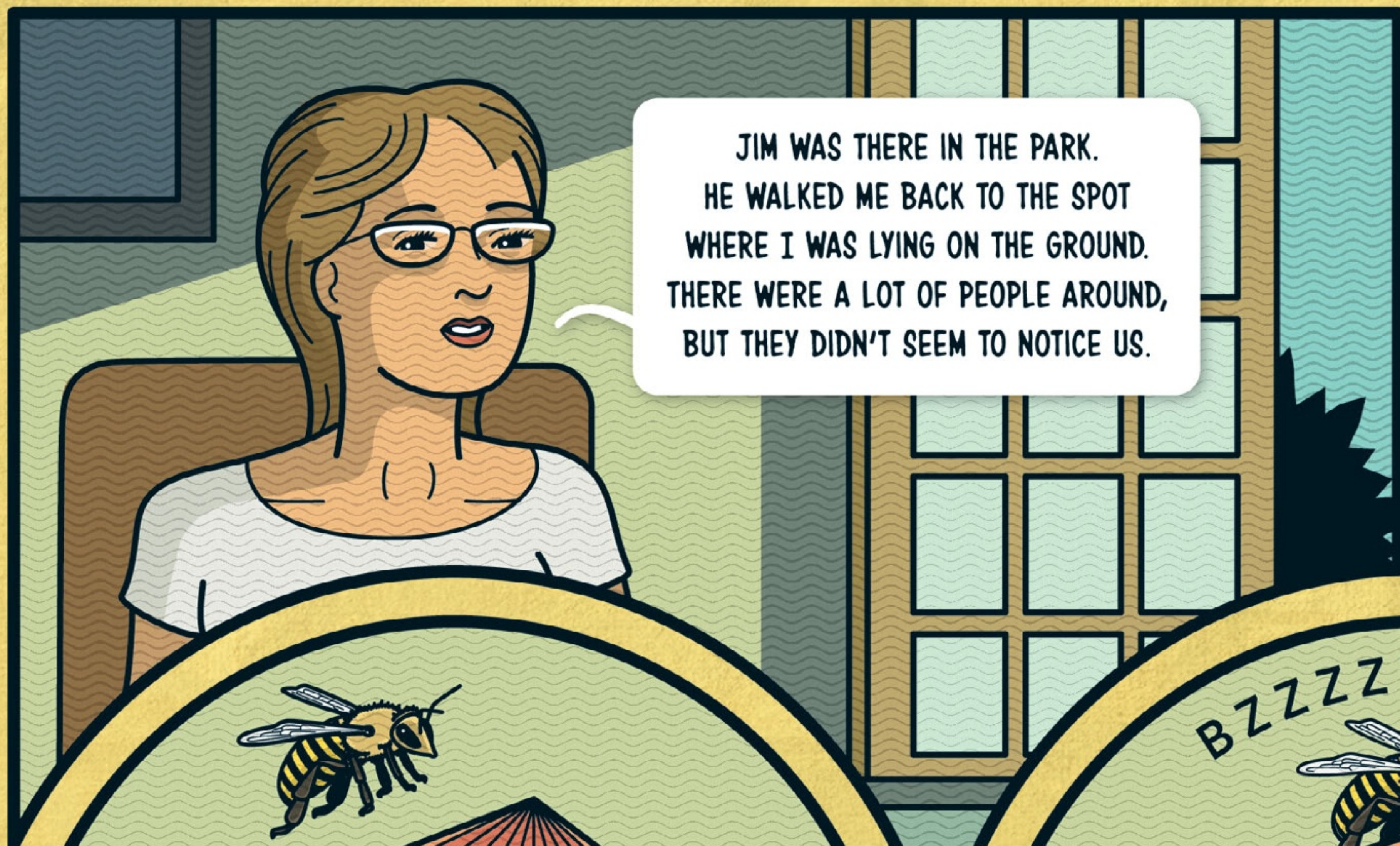
OH, HE'S SURE ALL RIGHT. A LITTLE BEE TOLD HIM.

LINDA HELD OUT HER HANDS, AND RAYMOND AND EDDIE EACH TOOK ONE. THE ROOM WENT DARK.



CHAPTER 9

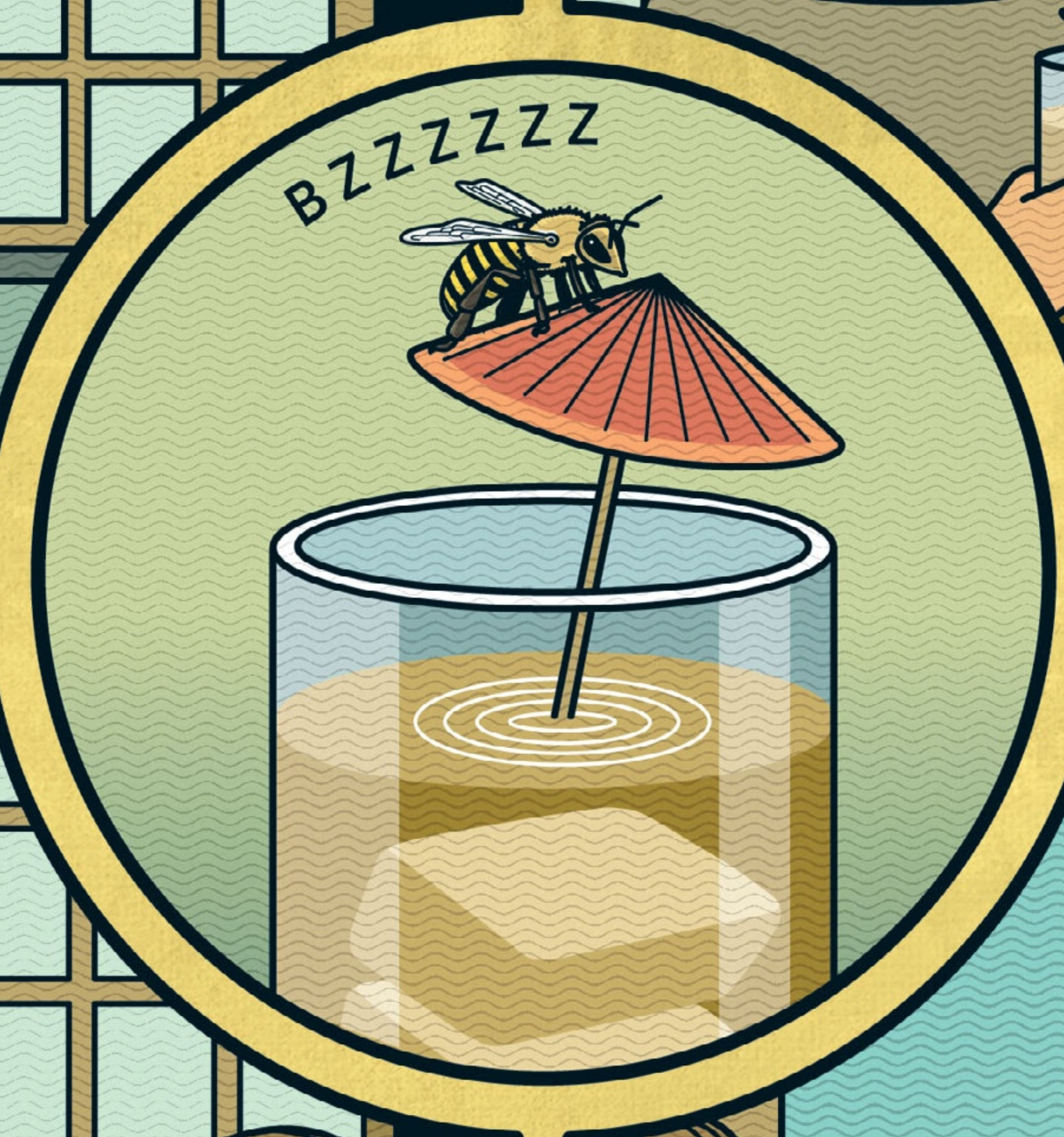




JIM WAS THERE IN THE PARK.
HE WALKED ME BACK TO THE SPOT
WHERE I WAS LYING ON THE GROUND.
THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND,
BUT THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO NOTICE US.



YOUR ATTACK WAS THE
RESULT OF A BEE STING?



DID JIM
HAND YOU
THIS LETTER
DIRECTLY?

NOT EXACTLY.
HE TUCKED IT
INTO MY POCKET.



IT'S REMARKABLE
THAT SUCH A
LITTLE THING
CAN HAVE SUCH
A BIG IMPACT.



I SHOULD
GO NOW.

BRYAN PICKED
UP OLIVIA'S
PURSE AND
TOOK OUT HER
ALLERGY KIT.



WHY RUSH OFF,
OLIVIA? IT'S
SUCH A LOVELY
AFTERNOON...



IRIS PICKED UP THE BEE AND LEANED FORWARD.

BRYAN TOOK HOLD OF OLIVIA'S WRISTS AND HELD HER ARMS STEADY.

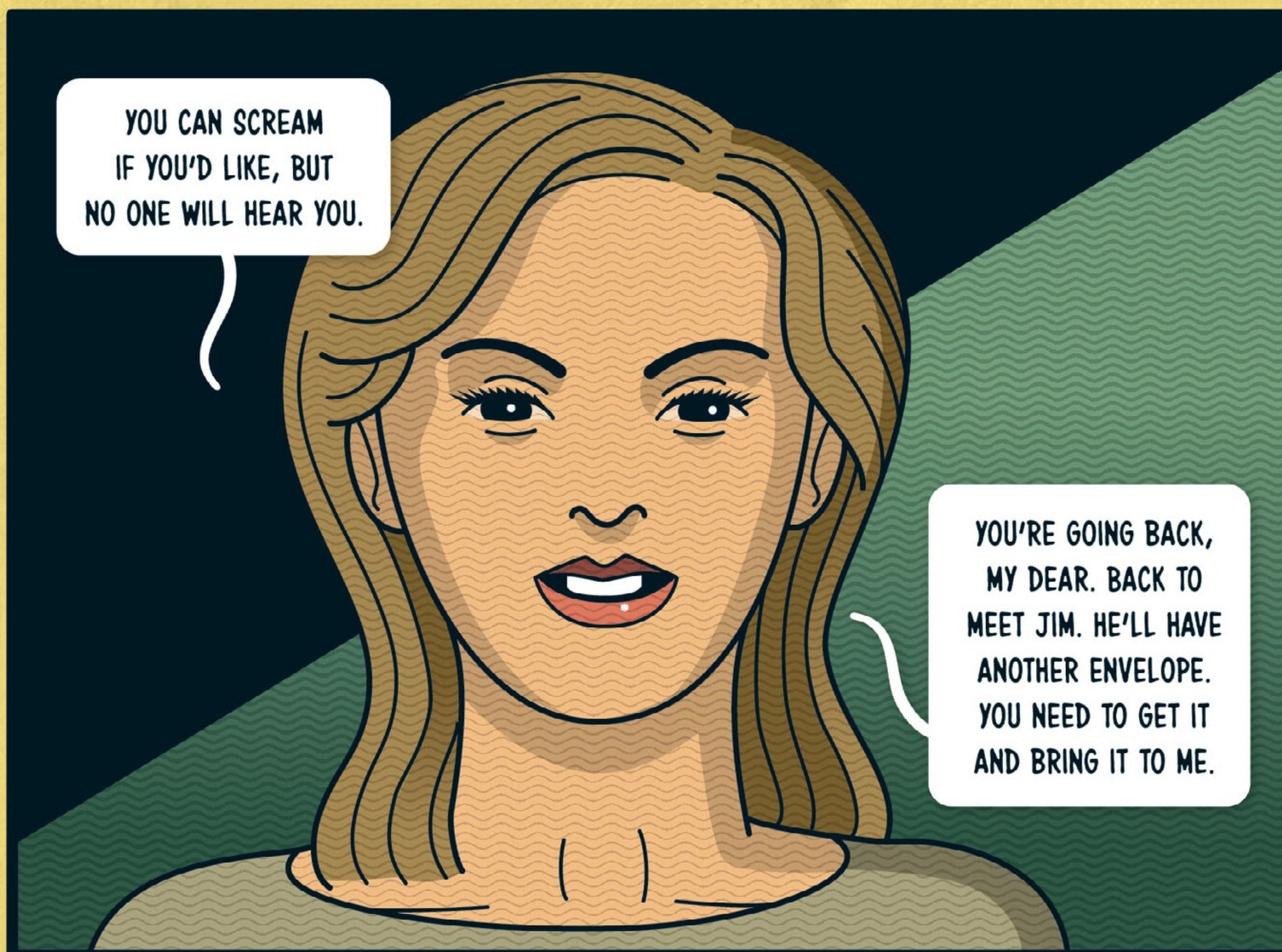


THE AGITATED INSECT BUZZED LOUDLY.

SHE LOWERED THE BEE ONTO OLIVIA'S FOREARM. IT PROMPTLY JABBED ITS STINGER INTO HER SKIN.

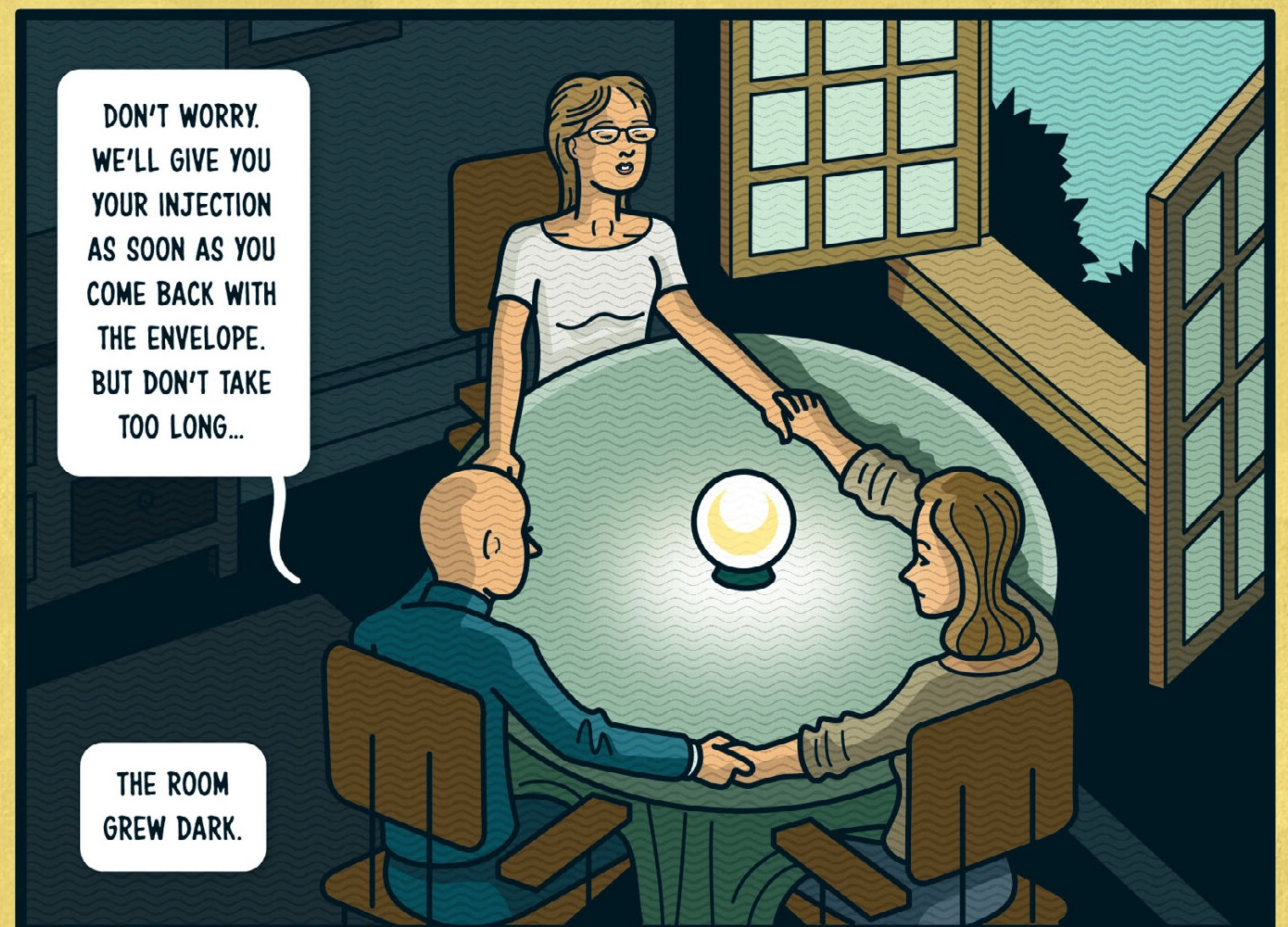


OLIVIA GASPED. SHE WAS TOO SHOCKED BY WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED TO MAKE MORE OF A NOISE.



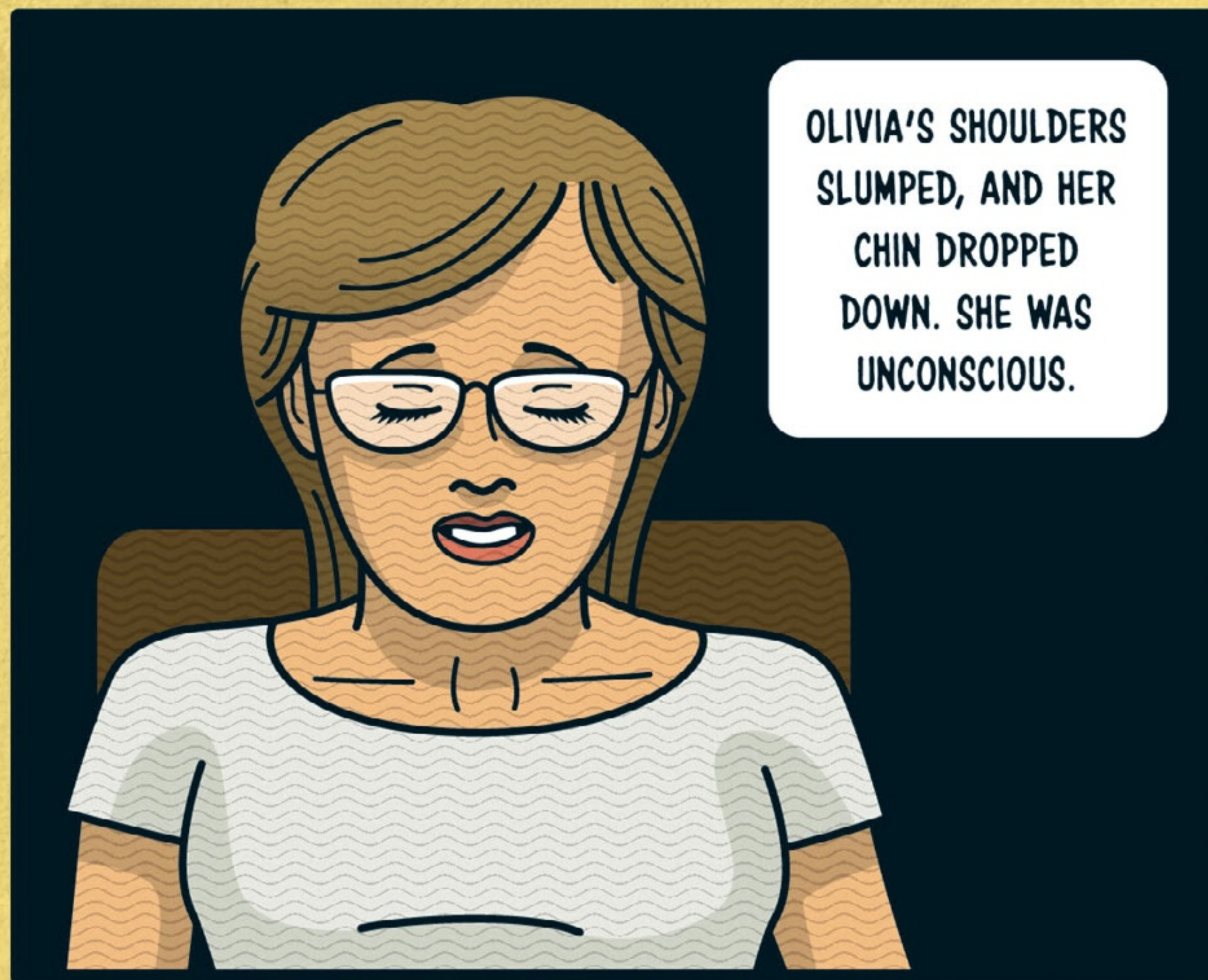
YOU CAN SCREAM IF YOU'D LIKE, BUT NO ONE WILL HEAR YOU.

YOU'RE GOING BACK, MY DEAR. BACK TO MEET JIM. HE'LL HAVE ANOTHER ENVELOPE. YOU NEED TO GET IT AND BRING IT TO ME.

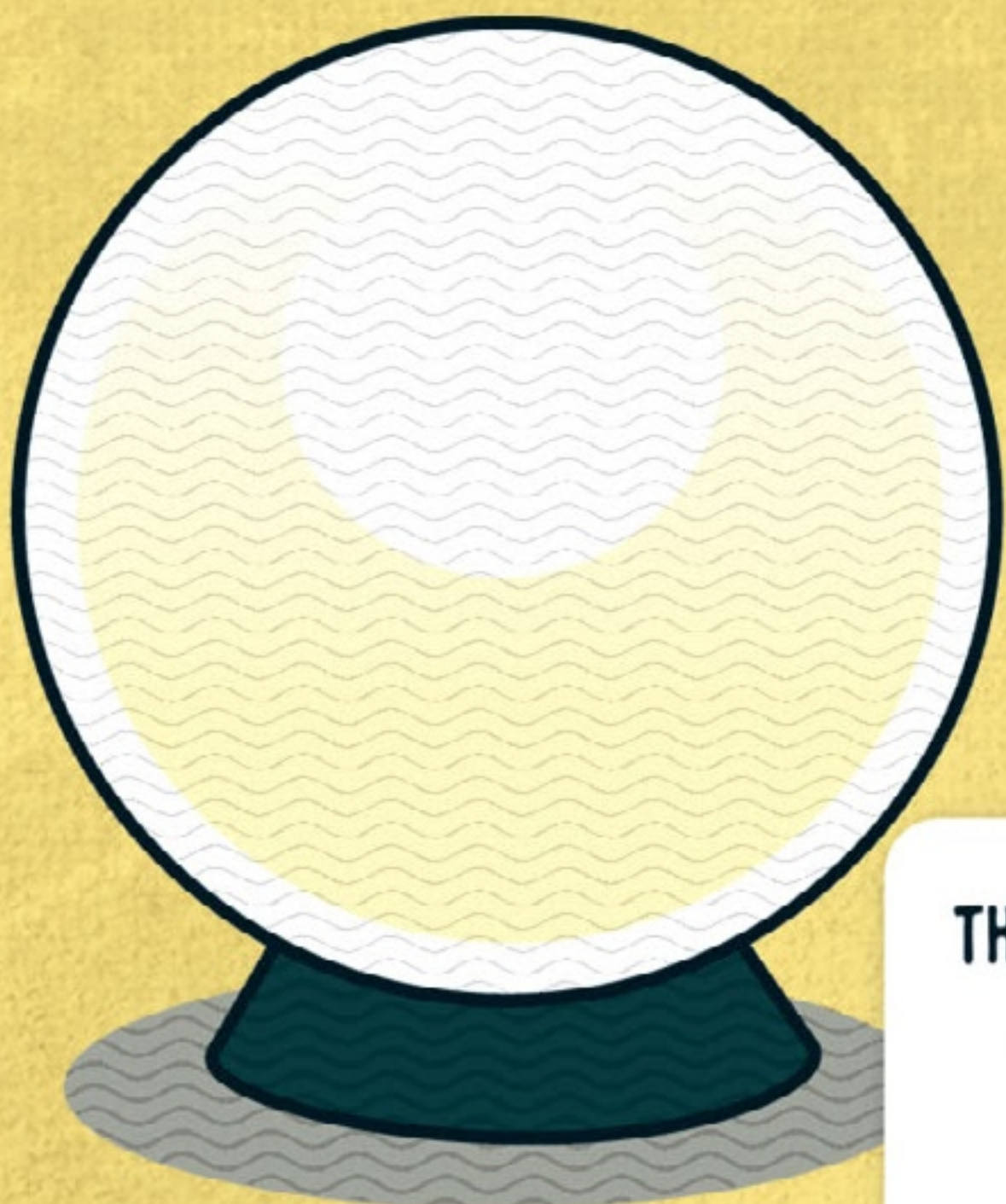


DON'T WORRY. WE'LL GIVE YOU YOUR INJECTION AS SOON AS YOU COME BACK WITH THE ENVELOPE. BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG...

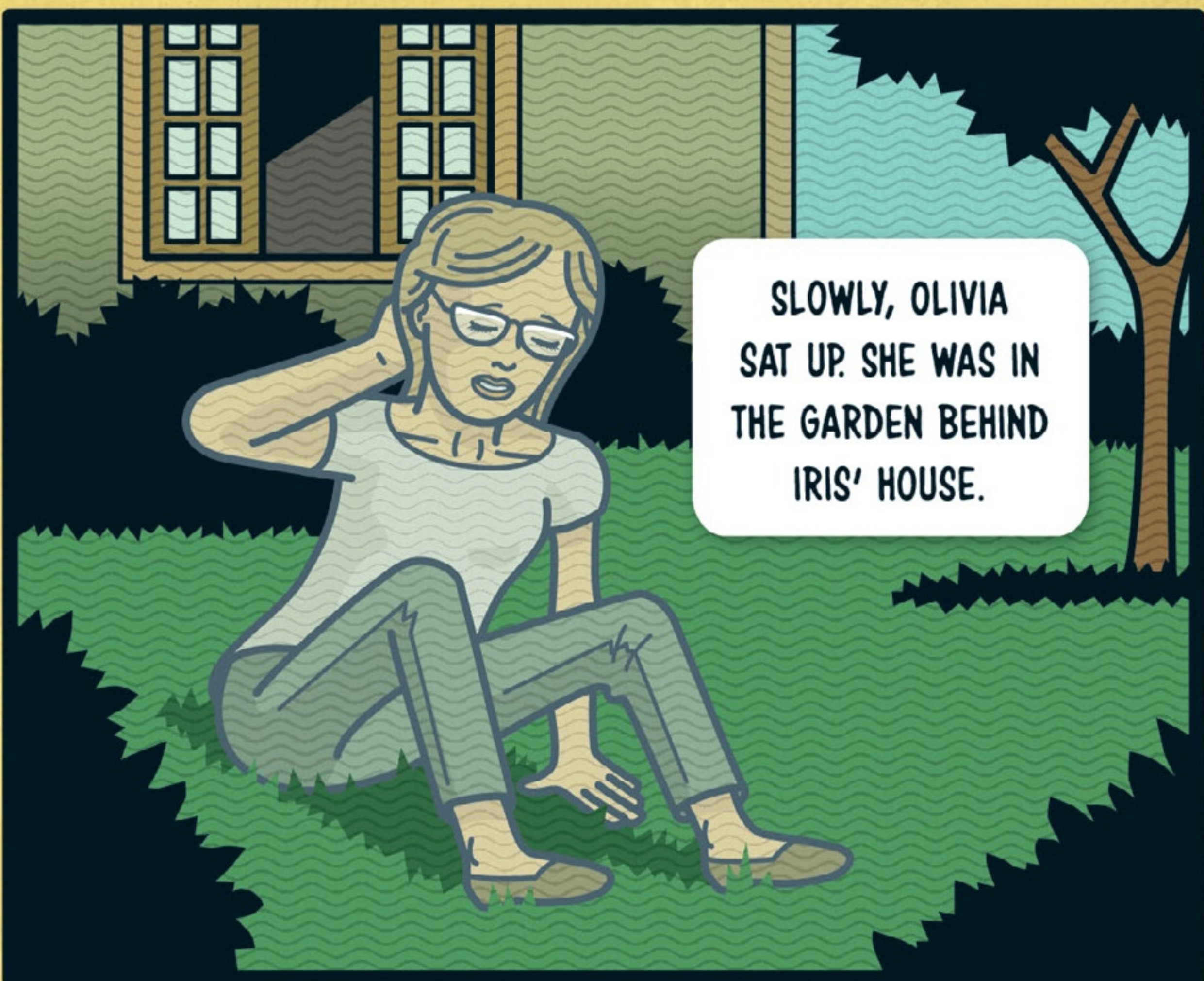
THE ROOM GREW DARK.



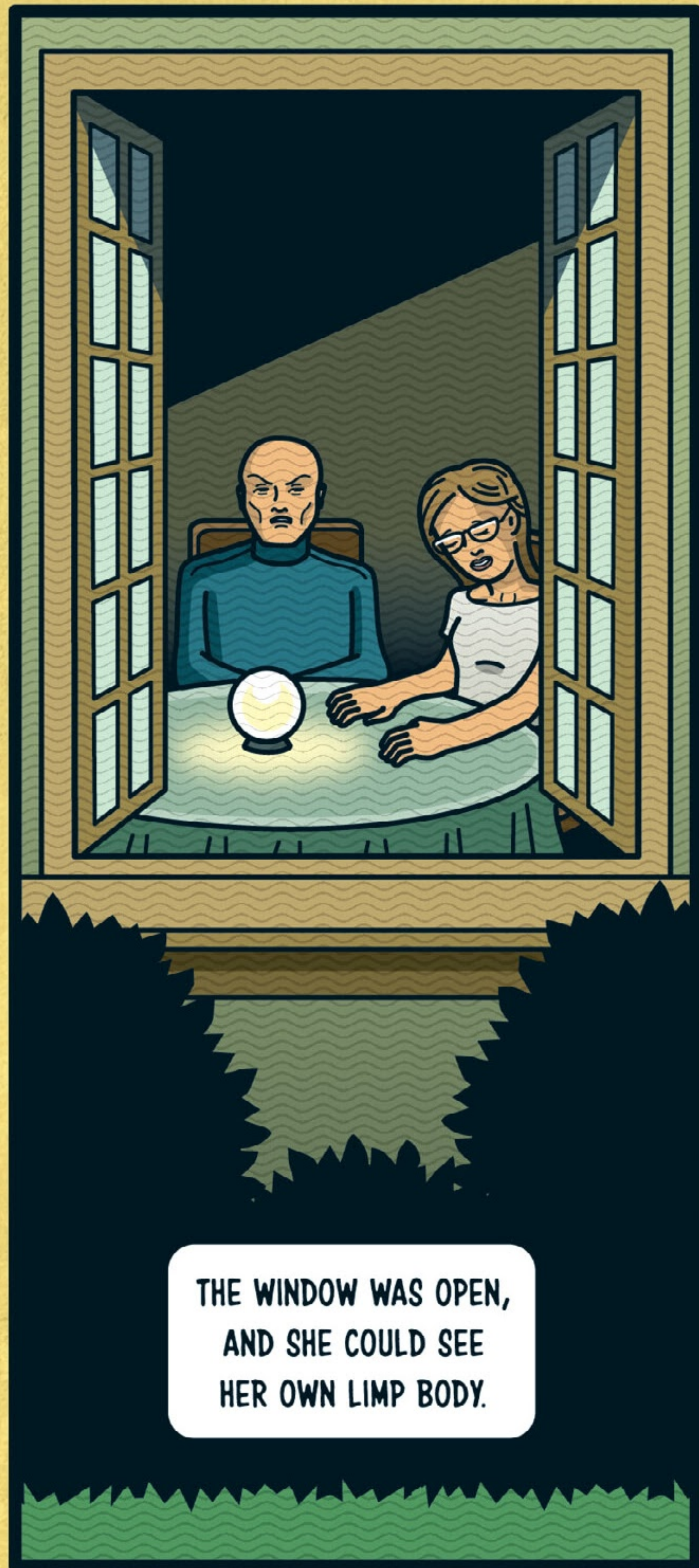
OLIVIA'S SHOULDERS
SLUMPED, AND HER
CHIN DROPPED
DOWN. SHE WAS
UNCONSCIOUS.



THE CRYSTAL BALL
ON THE TABLE
BRIGHTENED
AND DIMMED.



SLOWLY, OLIVIA
SAT UP. SHE WAS IN
THE GARDEN BEHIND
IRIS' HOUSE.

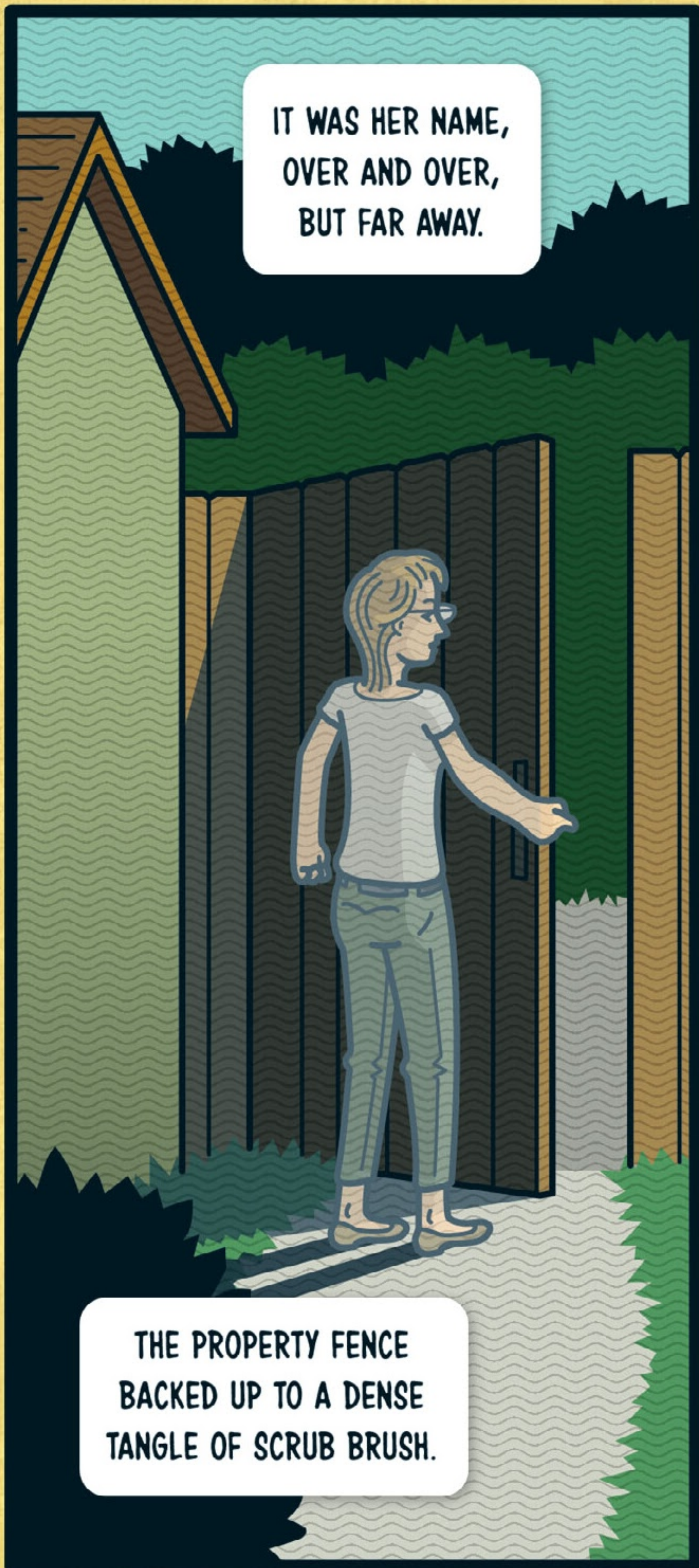


THE WINDOW WAS OPEN,
AND SHE COULD SEE
HER OWN LIMP BODY.



EVERYTHING WAS KIND
OF HAZY AND A
LITTLE INDISTINCT.

OFF IN THE DISTANCE
SHE HEARD A SOUND.



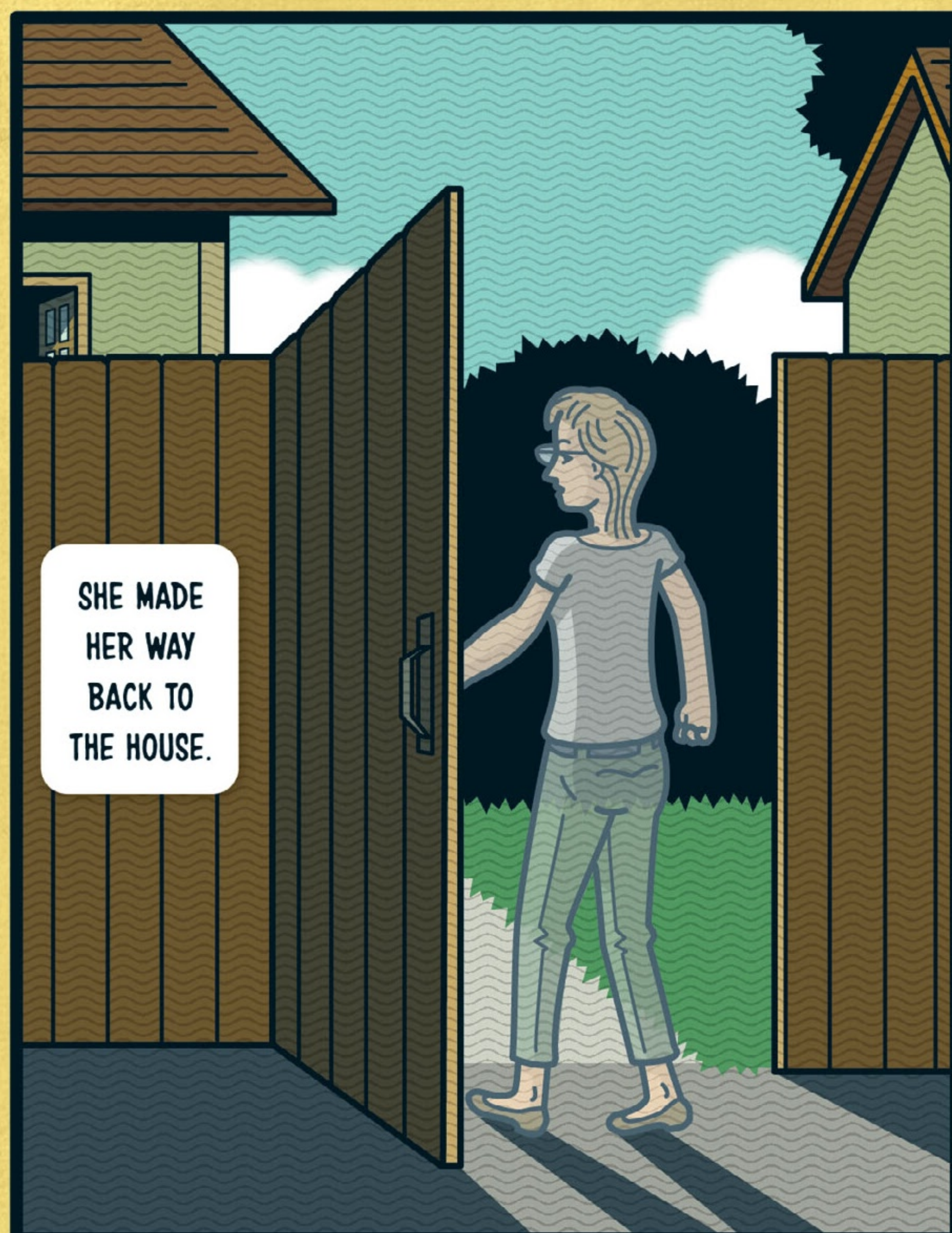
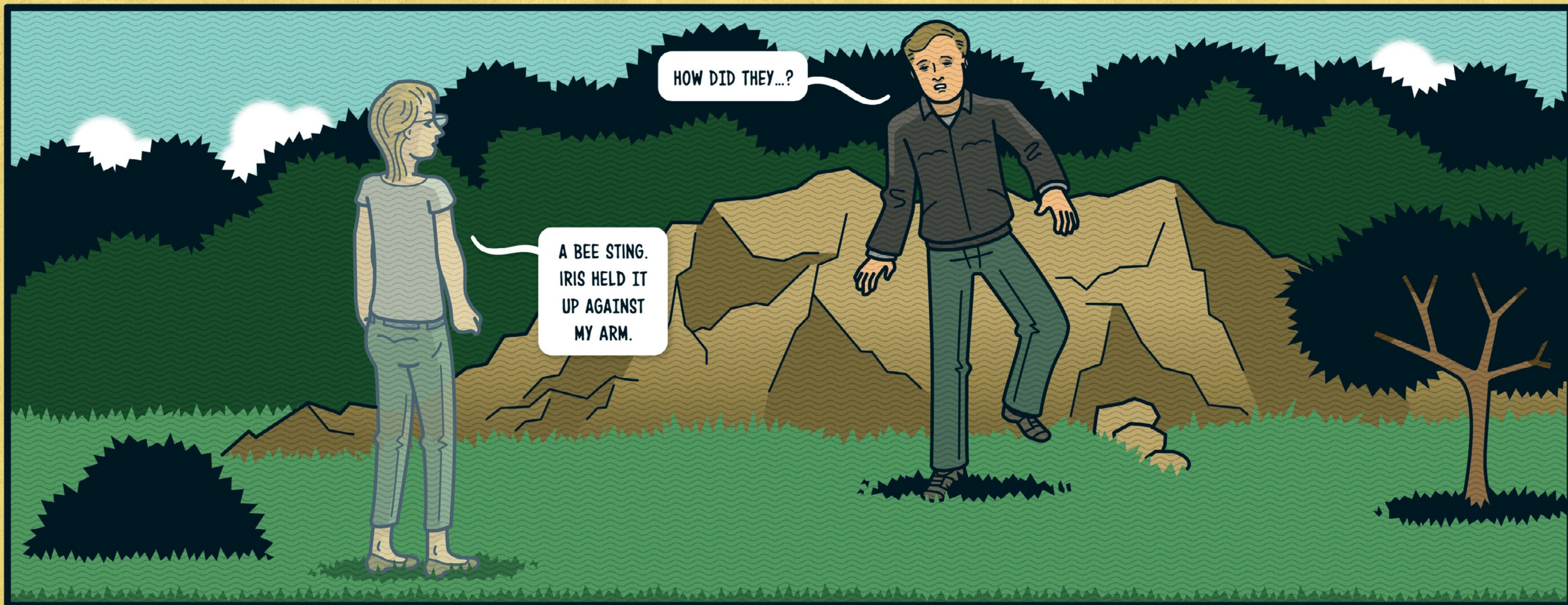
IT WAS HER NAME,
OVER AND OVER,
BUT FAR AWAY.

THE PROPERTY FENCE
BACKED UP TO A DENSE
TANGLE OF SCRUB BRUSH.



...O-LIV-IA, OLIV-IA.
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

JIM WAS PERCHED
ON A ROCK,
LOOKING DOWN
AT HER.



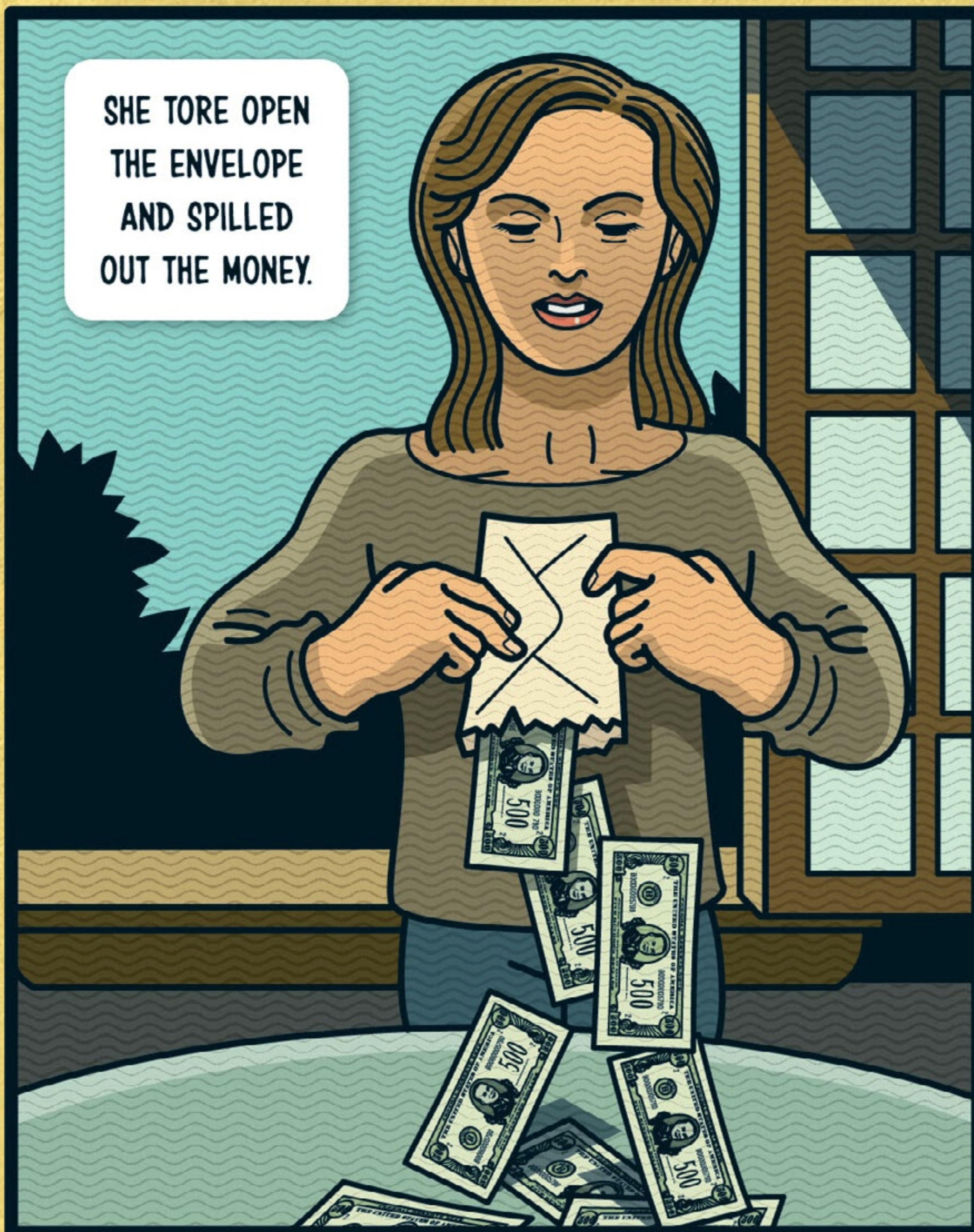
BRYAN HELD UP
OLIVIA'S ARM
AND JABBED
THE NEEDLE IN...



...WHILE IRIS REACHED OVER
AND TOOK THE ENVELOPE
FROM OLIVIA'S HAND.



SHE TORE OPEN
THE ENVELOPE
AND SPILLED
OUT THE MONEY.



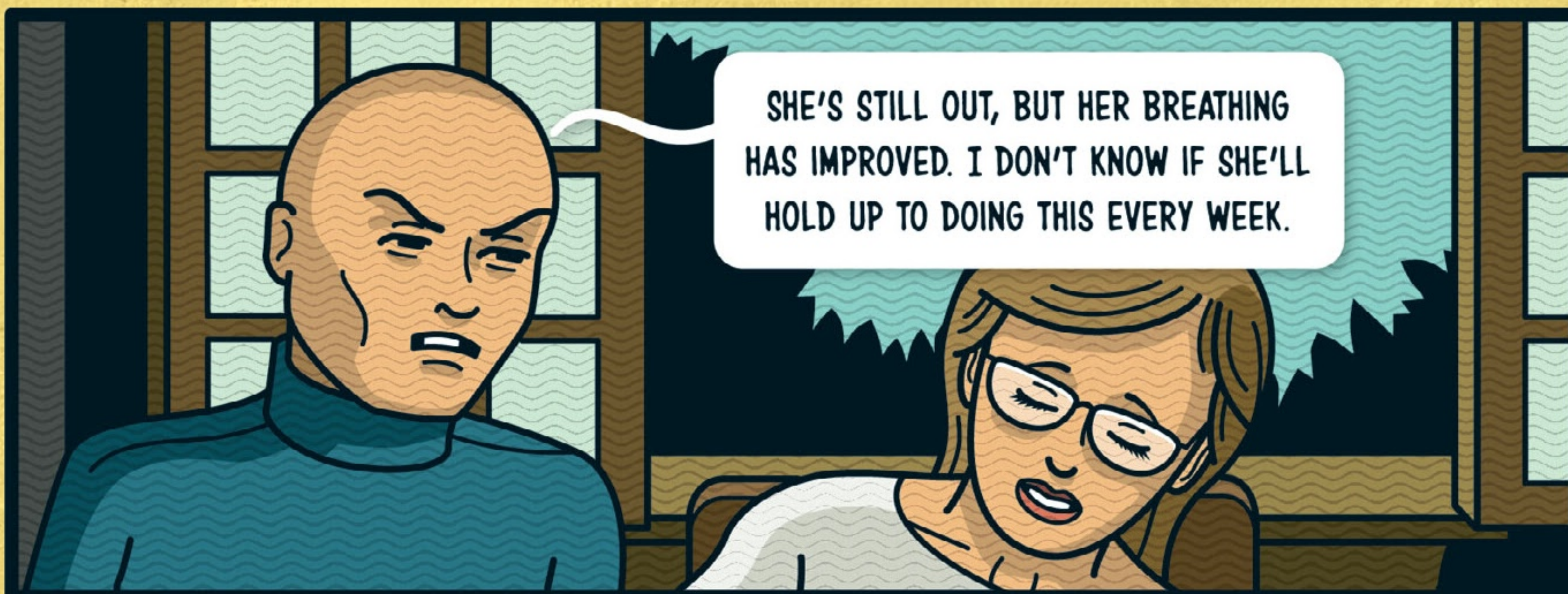
THERE WAS
ALSO A NOTE
FROM EDDIE...



...WHICH SHE
SLOWLY TORE
INTO PIECES.

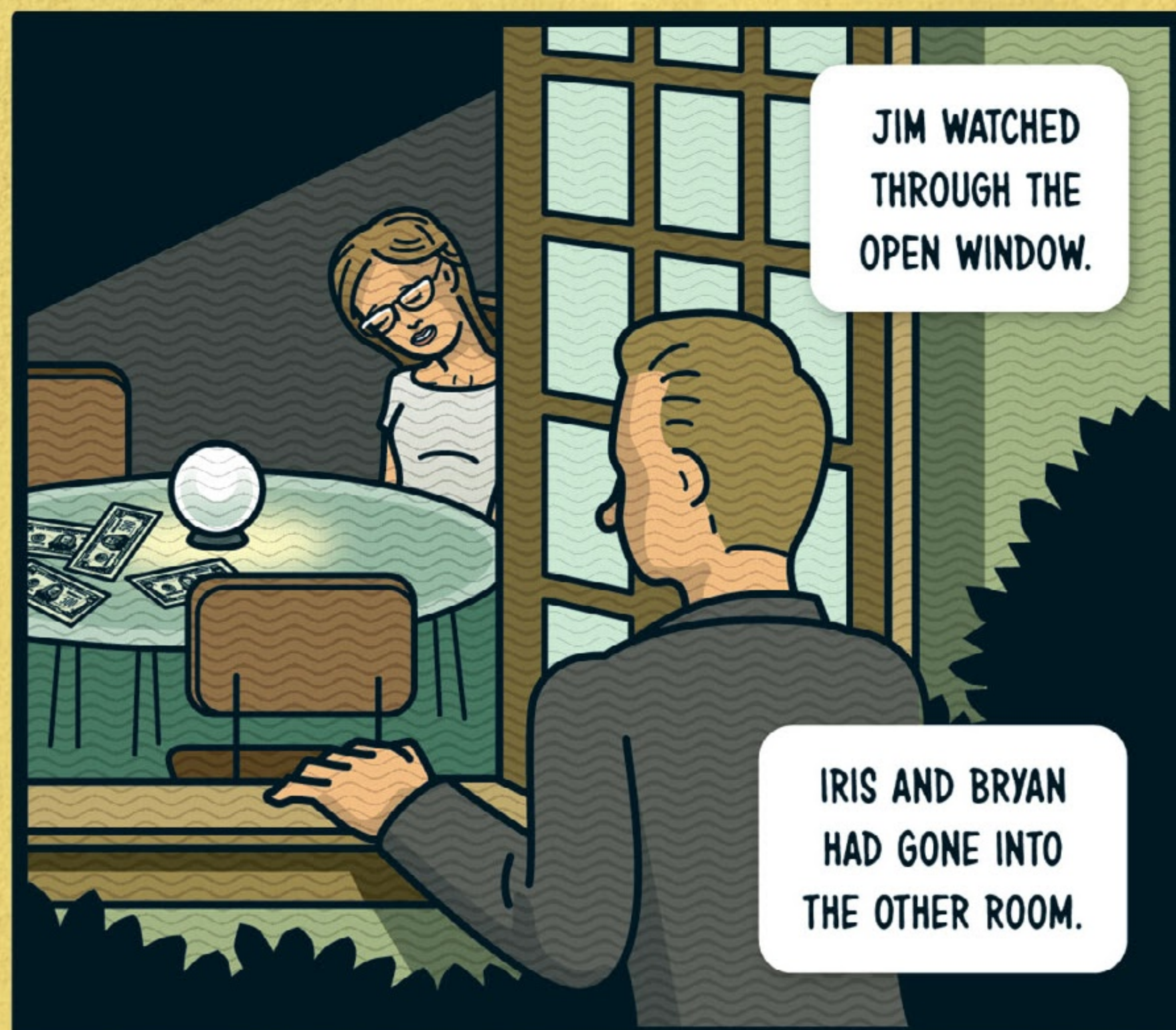


SHE'S STILL OUT, BUT HER BREATHING
HAS IMPROVED. I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'LL
HOLD UP TO DOING THIS EVERY WEEK.



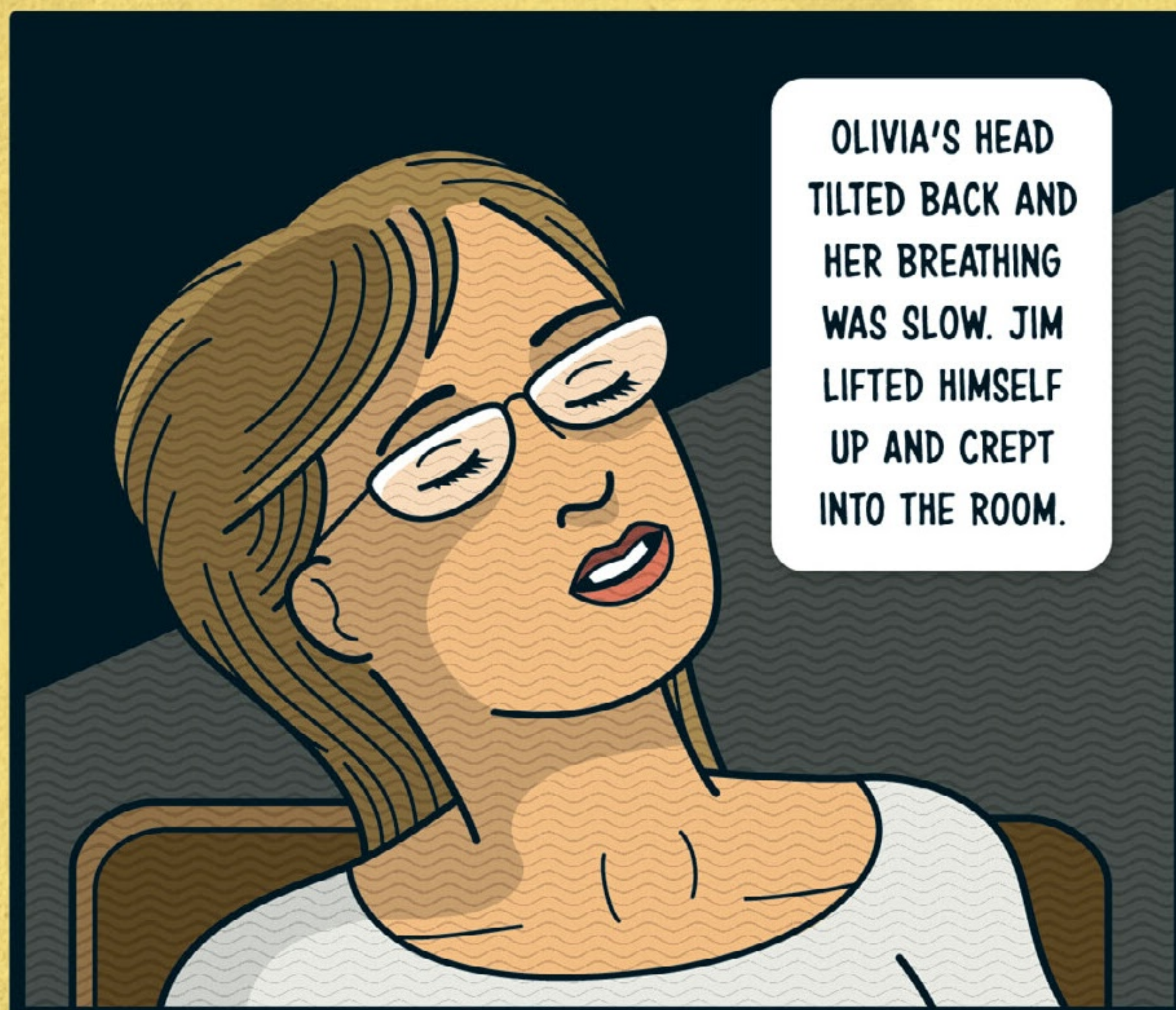
WHAT CHOICE DOES SHE HAVE?
SHE'LL DO WHAT EVERY GOOD
CONNECTION DOES...
SHE'LL GET US CONNECTED.



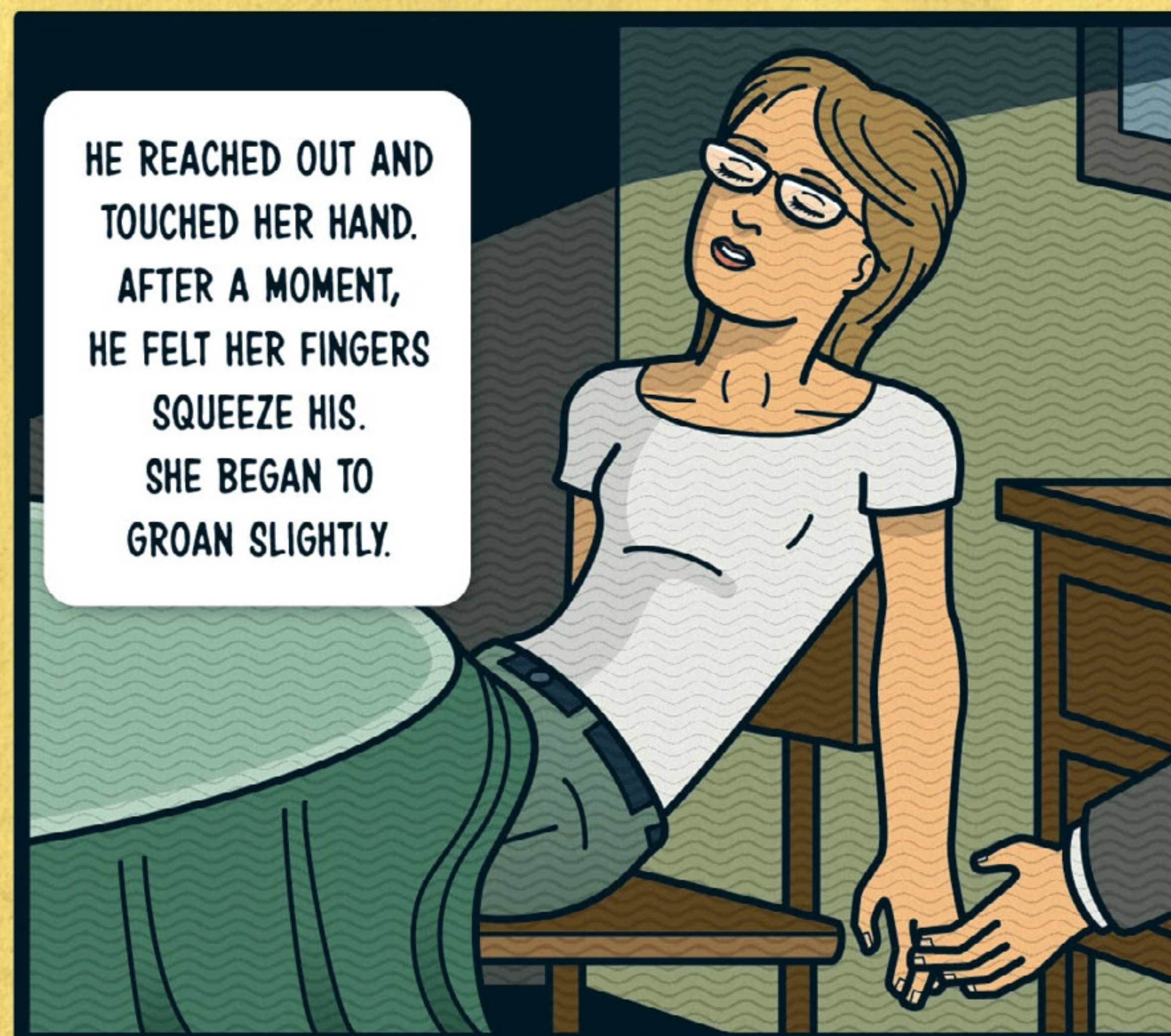


JIM WATCHED THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW.

IRIS AND BRYAN HAD GONE INTO THE OTHER ROOM.



OLIVIA'S HEAD TILTED BACK AND HER BREATHING WAS SLOW. JIM LIFTED HIMSELF UP AND CREPT INTO THE ROOM.



HE REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HER HAND. AFTER A MOMENT, HE FELT HER FINGERS SQUEEZE HIS. SHE BEGAN TO GROAN SLIGHTLY.



JIM HEARD IRIS AND BRYAN COMING BACK DOWN THE HALL.

HE SLIPPED OUT THE WINDOW.

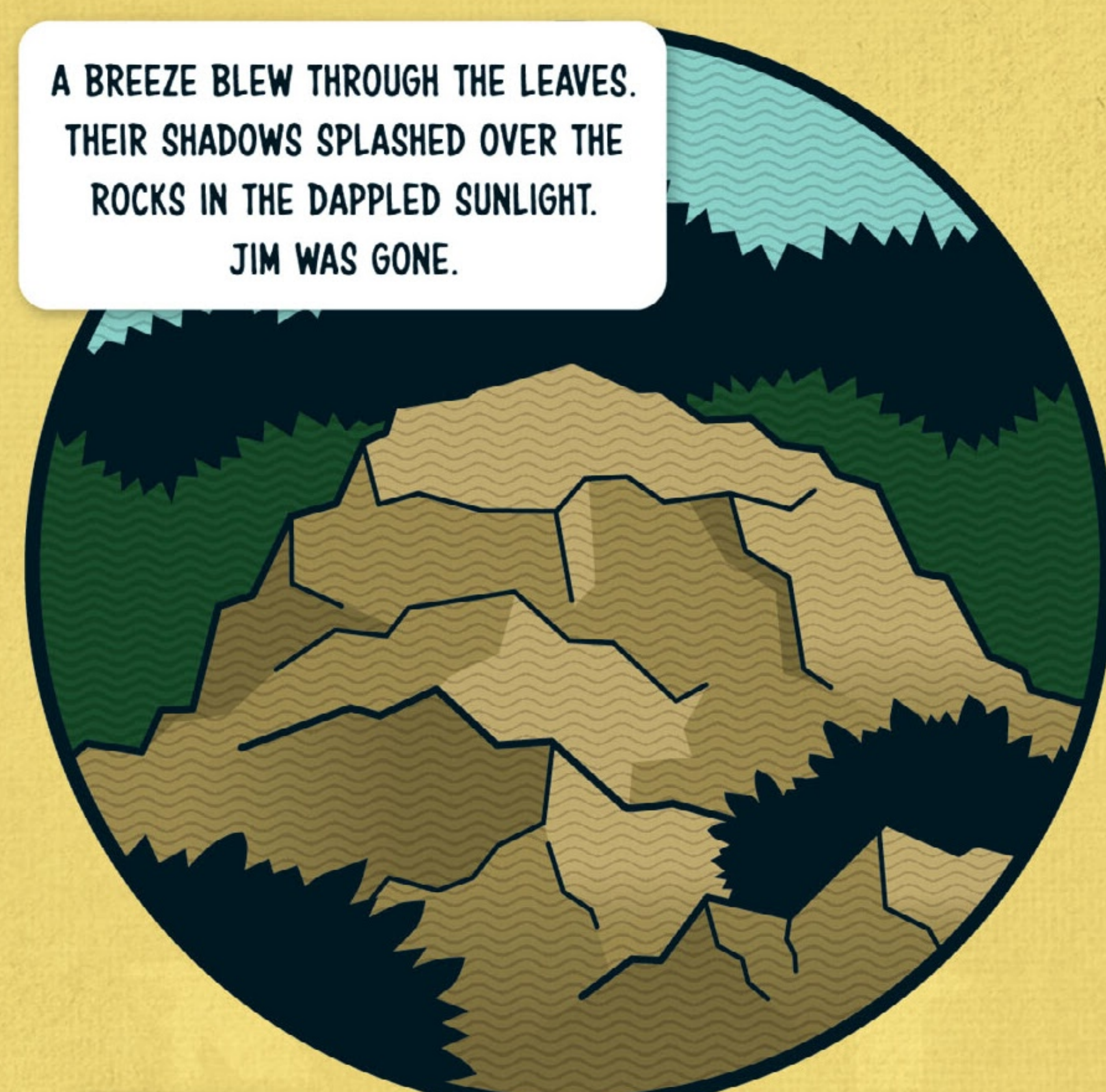


SHE'S COMING AROUND NOW.

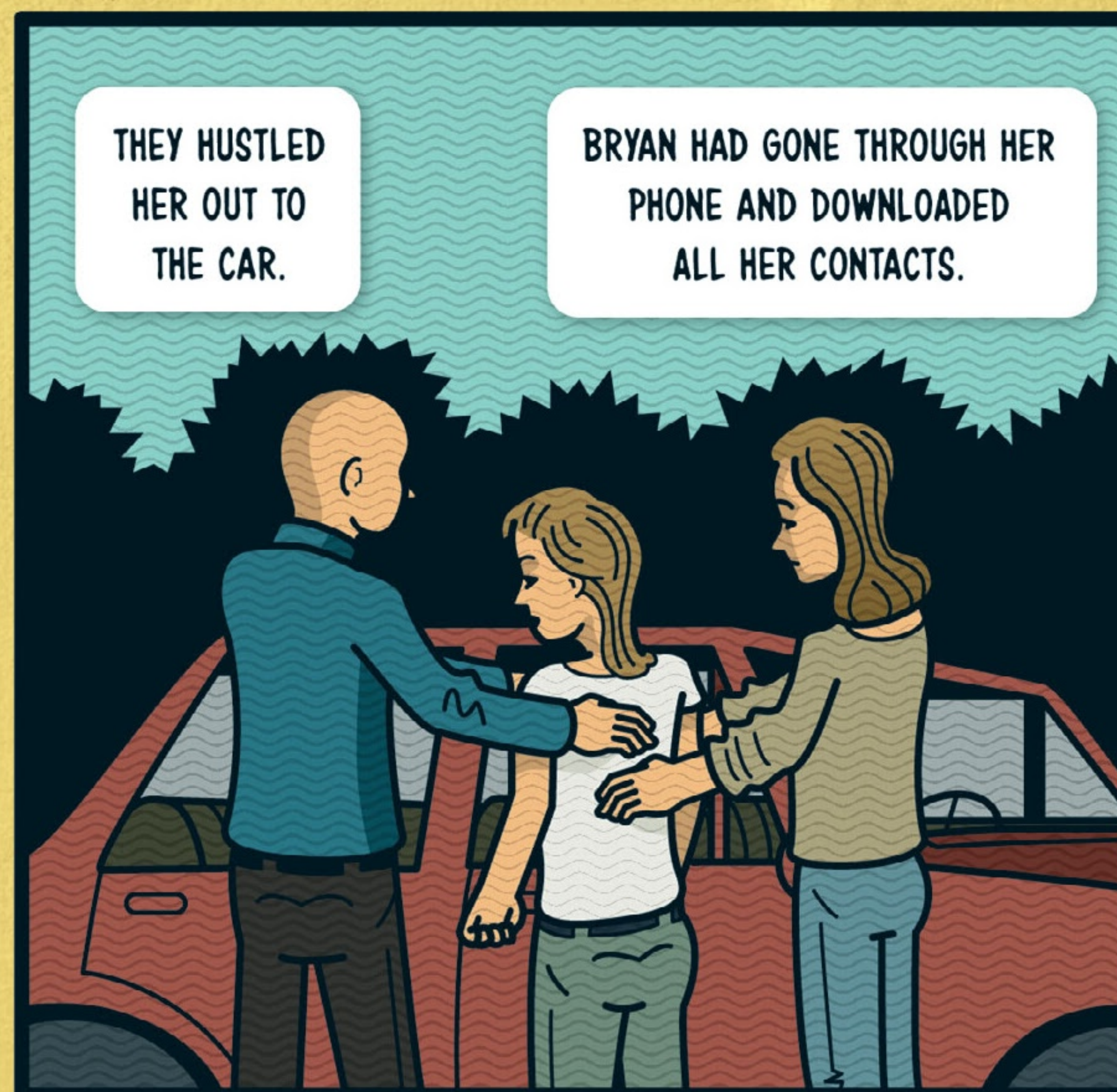
YOU DID FINE, OLIVIA. EVERYTHING WENT AS PLANNED.



JIM MADE HIS WAY TO THE DOOR IN THE BACK OF THE GARDEN.



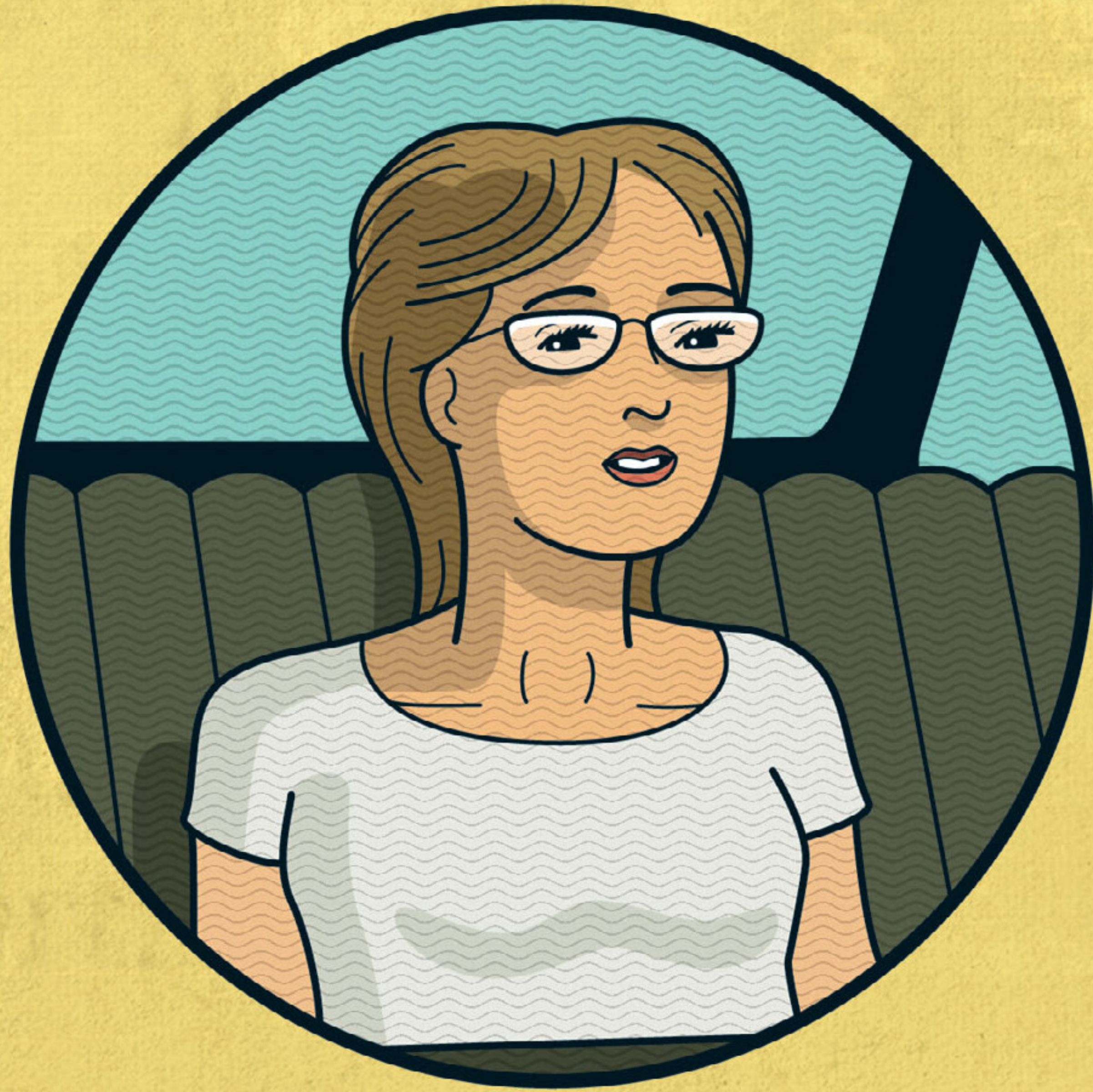
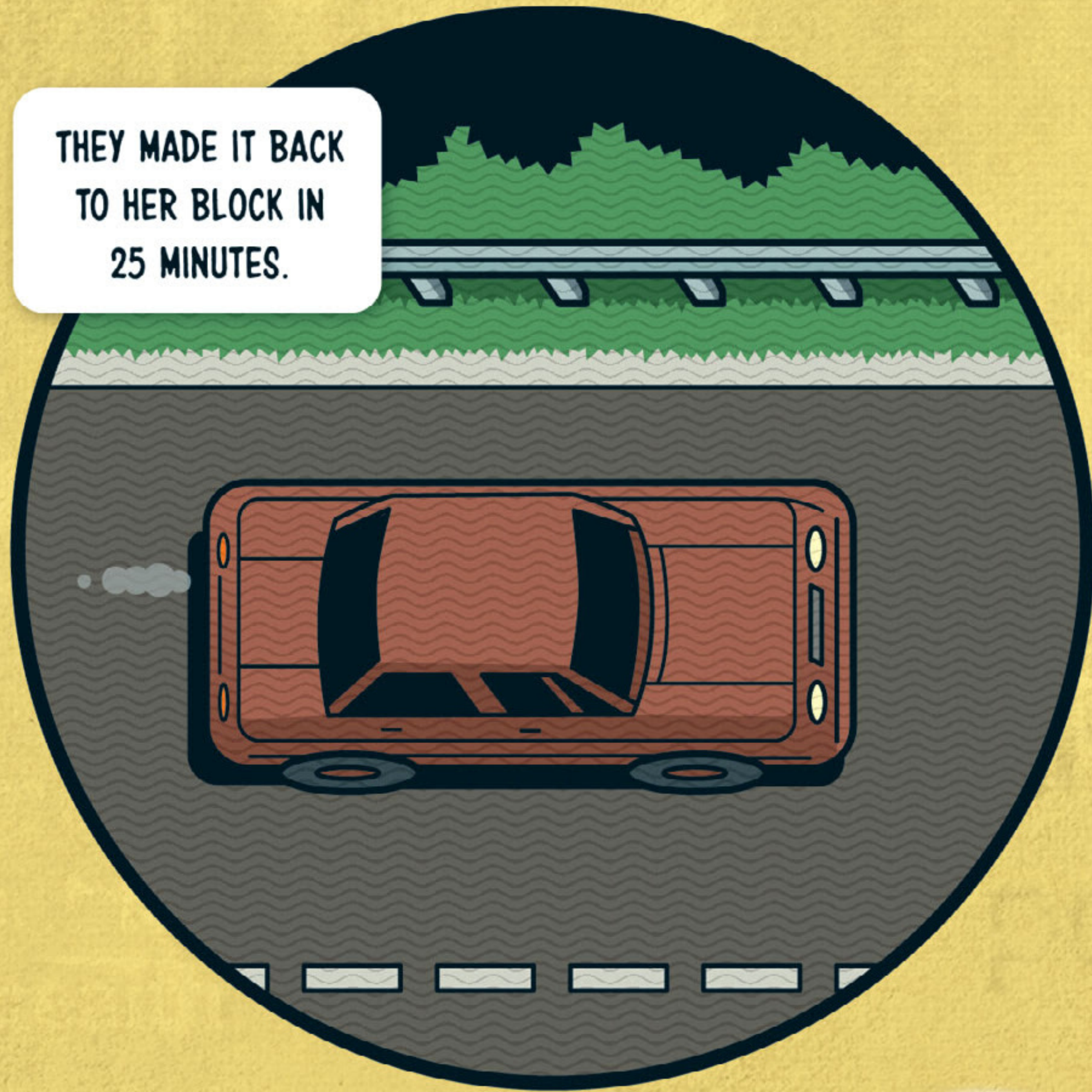
A BREEZE BLEW THROUGH THE LEAVES. THEIR SHADOWS SPLASHED OVER THE ROCKS IN THE DAPPLED SUNLIGHT. JIM WAS GONE.



THEY HUSTLED HER OUT TO THE CAR.

BRYAN HAD GONE THROUGH HER PHONE AND DOWNLOADED ALL HER CONTACTS.

THEY MADE IT BACK
TO HER BLOCK IN
25 MINUTES.



I'LL PICK YOU UP
HERE, EVERY WEEK,
FOR THE SÉANCE.
I'LL TEXT YOU
BEFORE I COME.

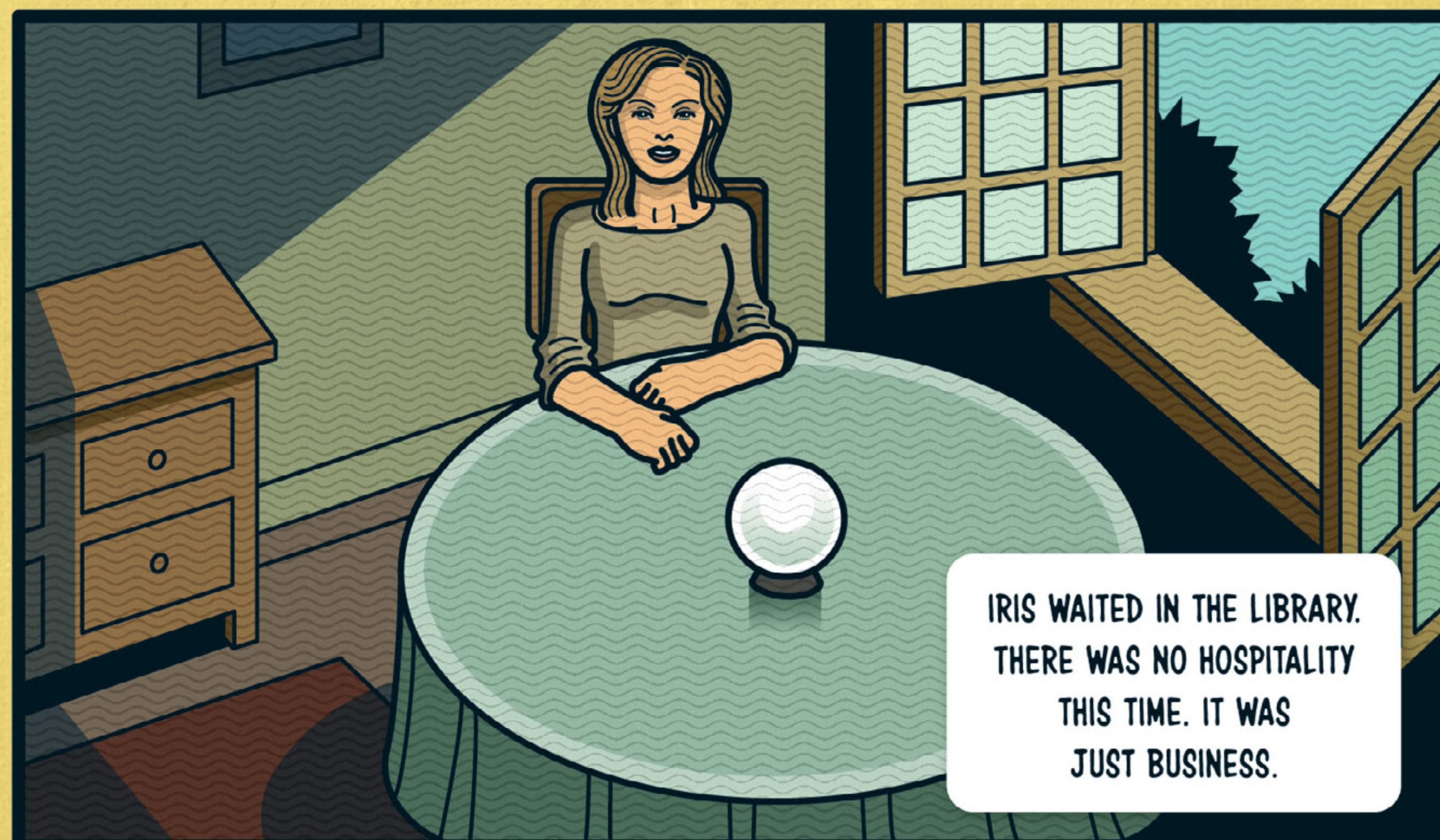
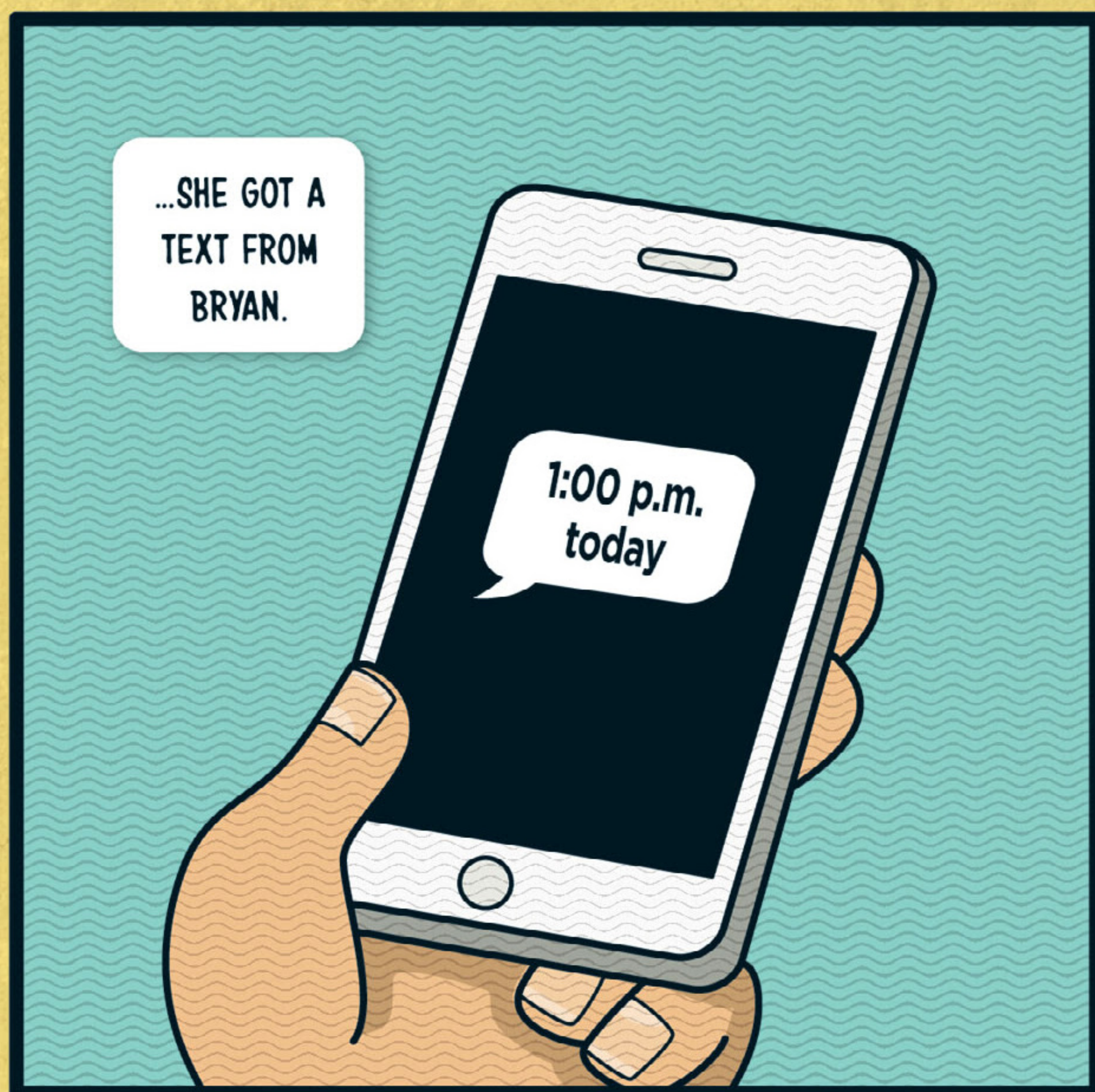
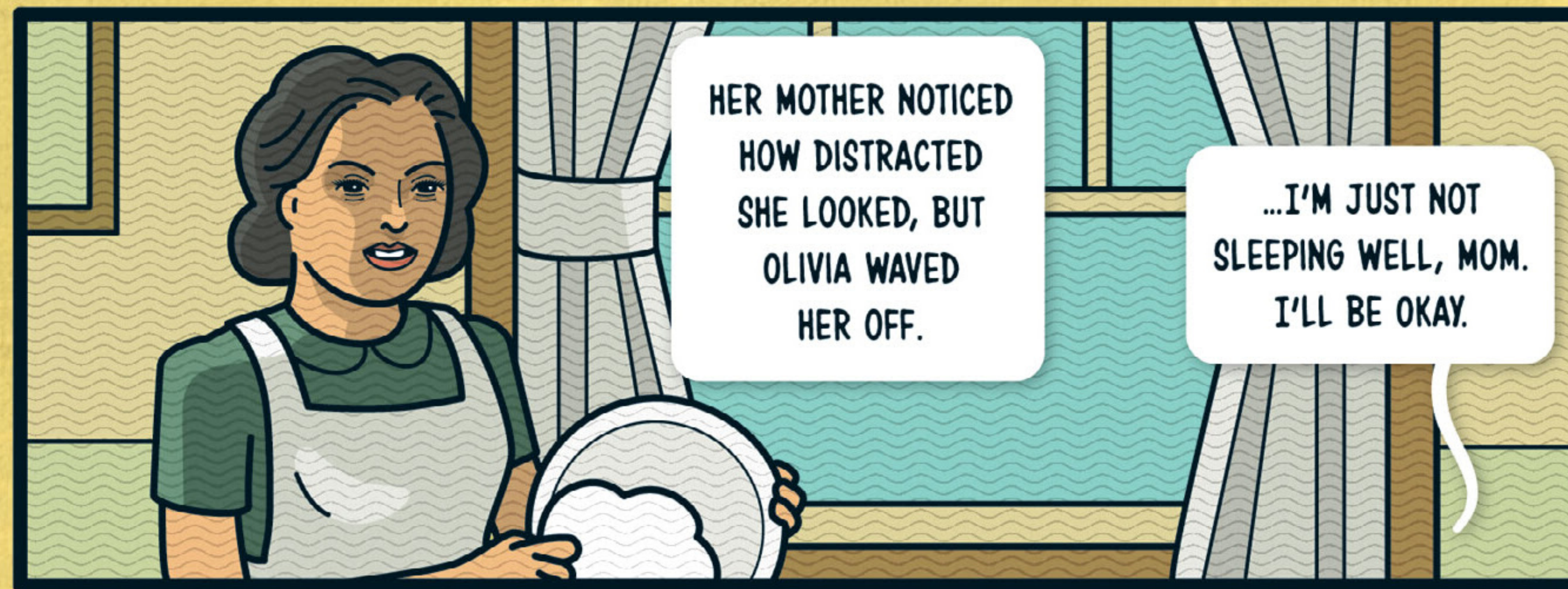


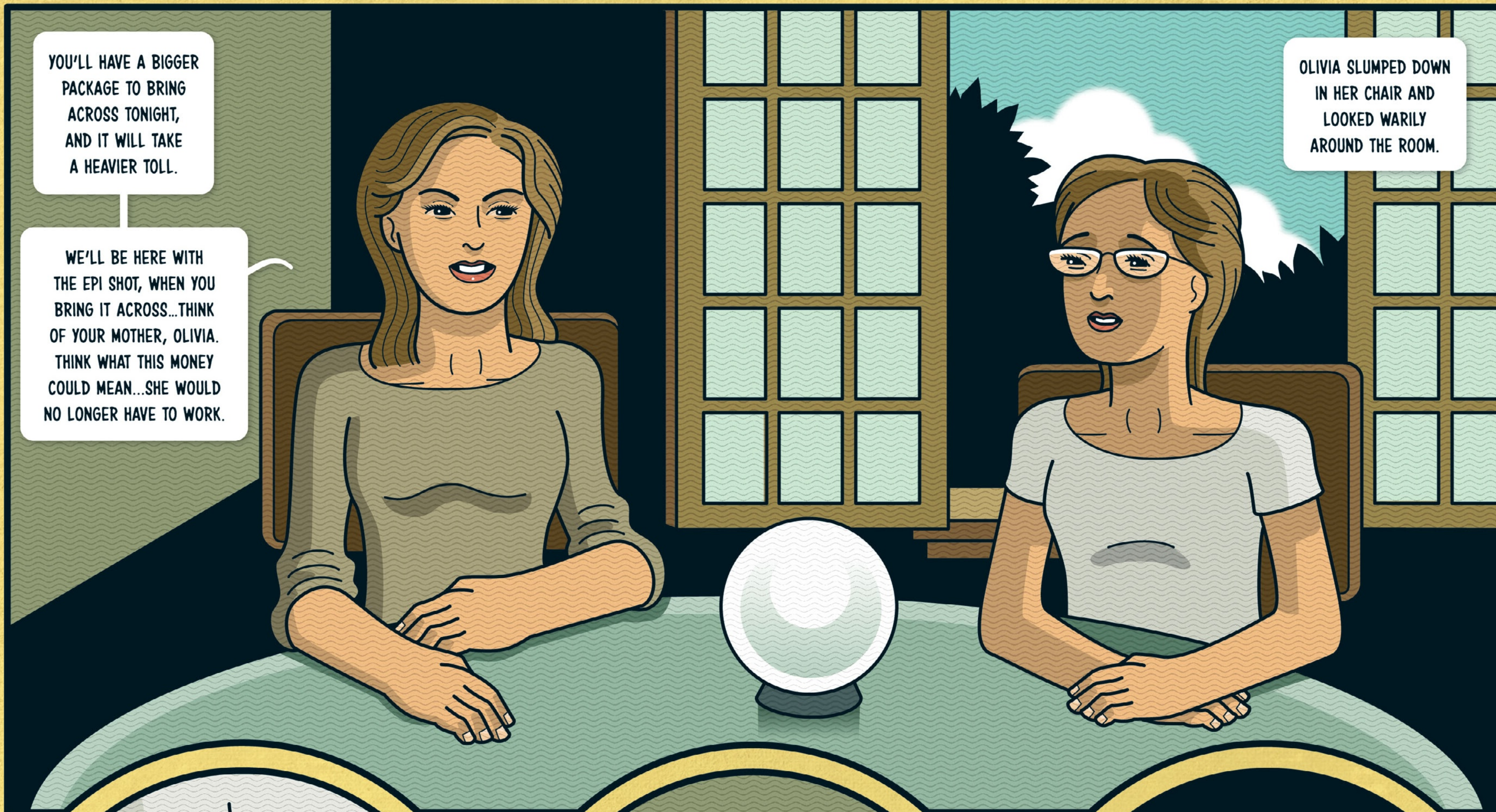
IT'LL BE YOUR DECISION IF
YOU WANT TO COMPLY WITH US.
BUT THE COST OF THAT DECISION
FALLS ON YOUR MOM AND BROTHER.
THEY'LL PAY THE PRICE FOR
YOUR MISTAKE.

IF YOU DO COMPLY, YOU'LL MAKE
A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY.
THEY UNDERSTAND HOW VALUABLE
YOU ARE...YOUR MOM WOULDN'T
HAVE TO WORK ANYMORE.



BRYAN PULLED OVER
TWO BLOCKS FROM HER HOUSE.
SHE GOT OUT WITHOUT SAYING
A WORD AND WALKED HOME.





YOU'LL HAVE A BIGGER PACKAGE TO BRING ACROSS TONIGHT, AND IT WILL TAKE A HEAVIER TOLL.

WE'LL BE HERE WITH THE EPI SHOT, WHEN YOU BRING IT ACROSS...THINK OF YOUR MOTHER, OLIVIA. THINK WHAT THIS MONEY COULD MEAN...SHE WOULD NO LONGER HAVE TO WORK.

OLIVIA SLUMPED DOWN IN HER CHAIR AND LOOKED WARILY AROUND THE ROOM.



BRYAN SAT DOWN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF OLIVIA AND HELD HER ARM.



IRIS UNSCREWED THE LID AND REACHED IN...



...THE LIGHTS DIMMED.



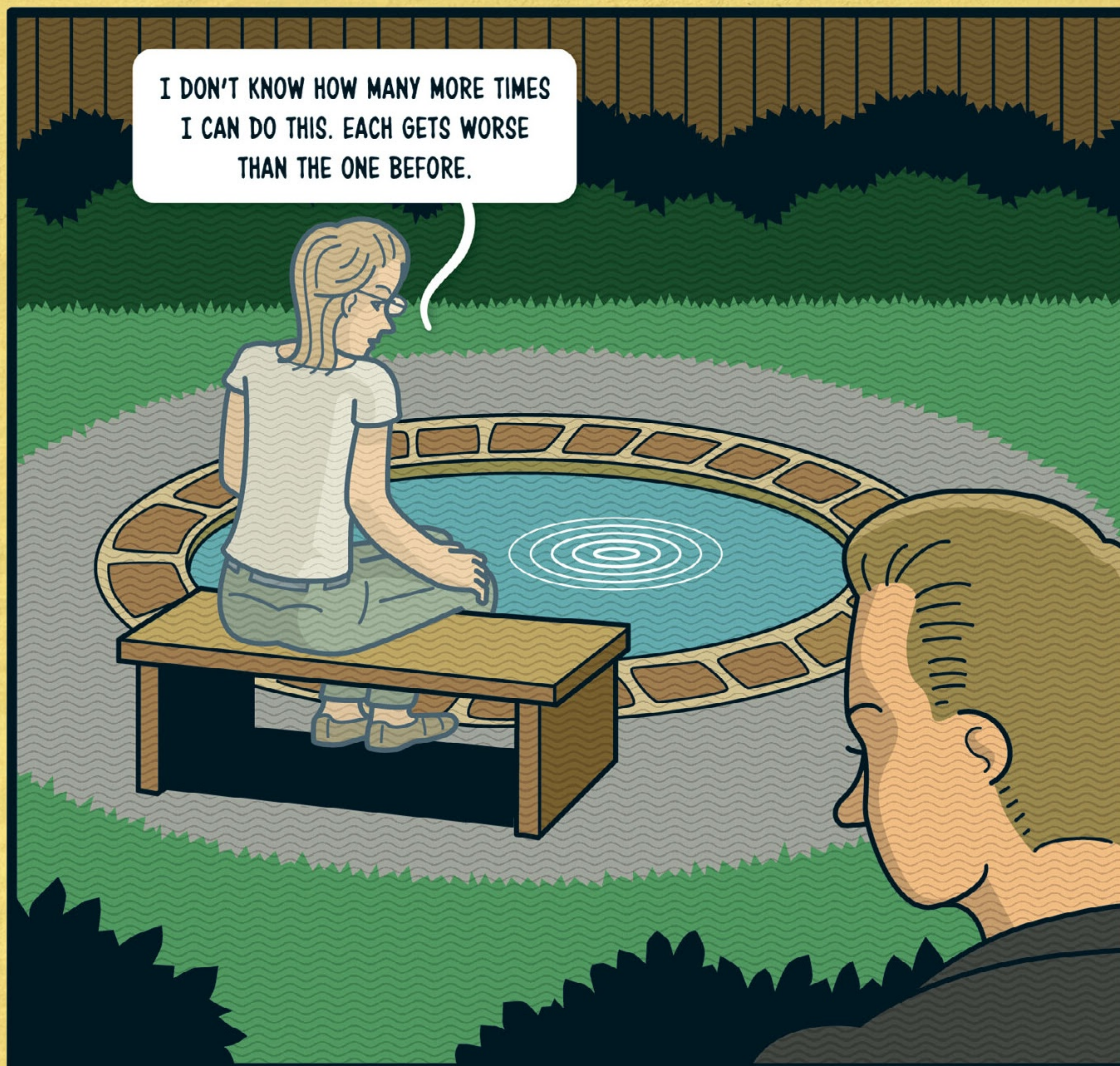
IN A FEW MINUTES
JIM COULD FEEL
THE STATIC CHARGE
RUNNING BETWEEN
THEM. HEARING A
CROW'S CAW,
JIM LOOKED UP.



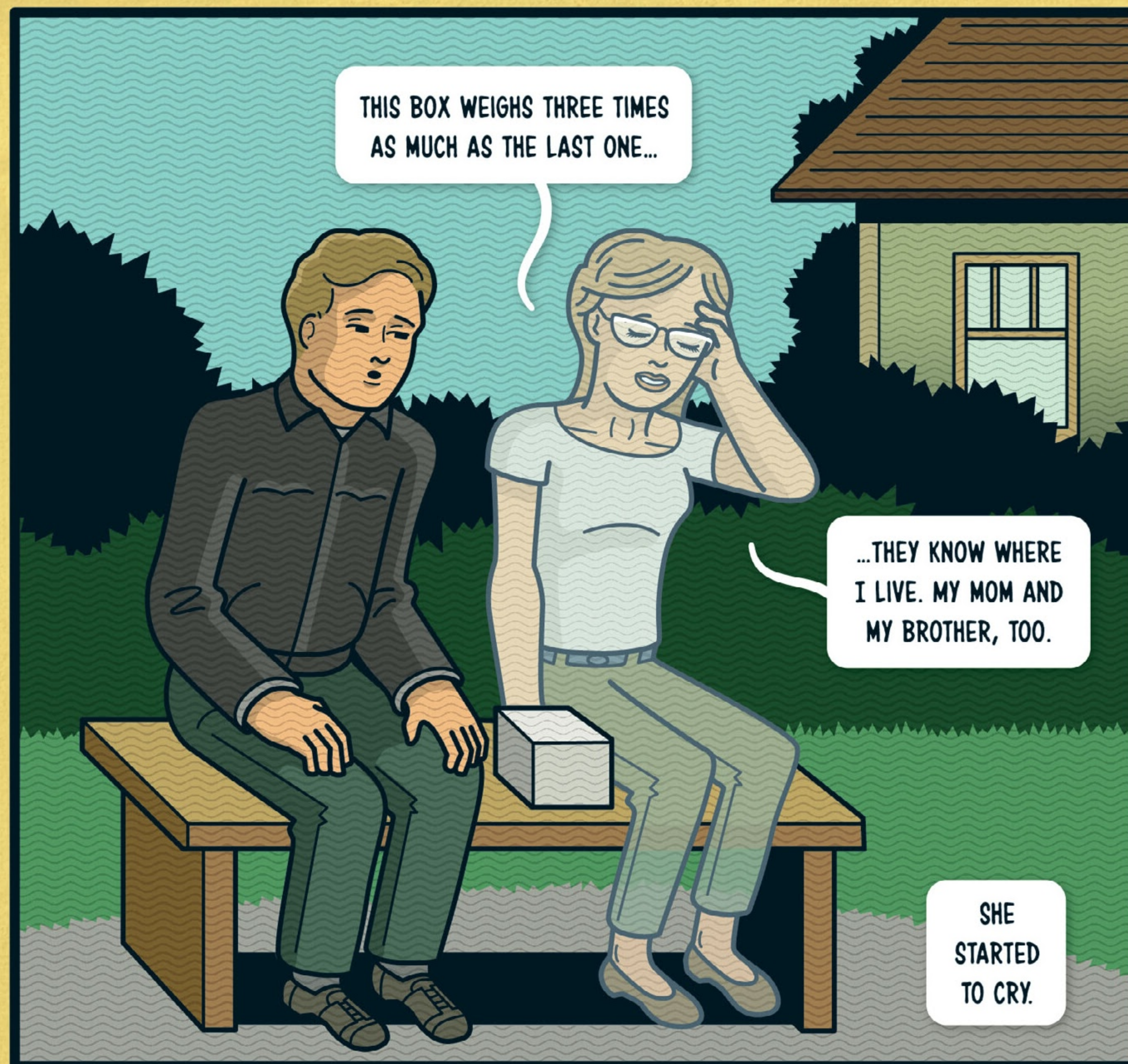
THE BIRD WAS SITTING
ON A TREE BRANCH
LOOKING DOWN AT HIM.



JIM PULLED THE
FENCE DOOR OPEN
AND WALKED IN.



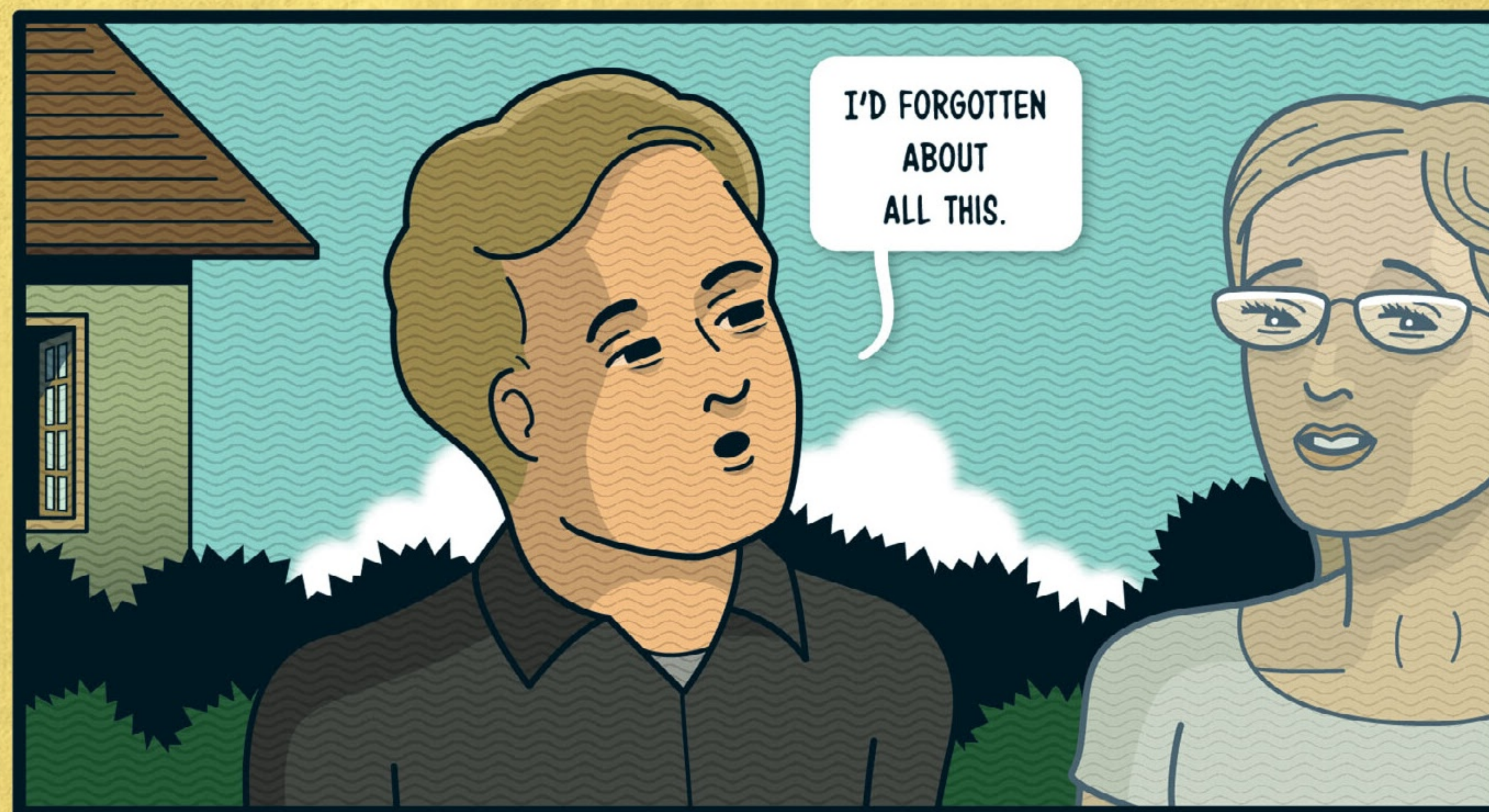
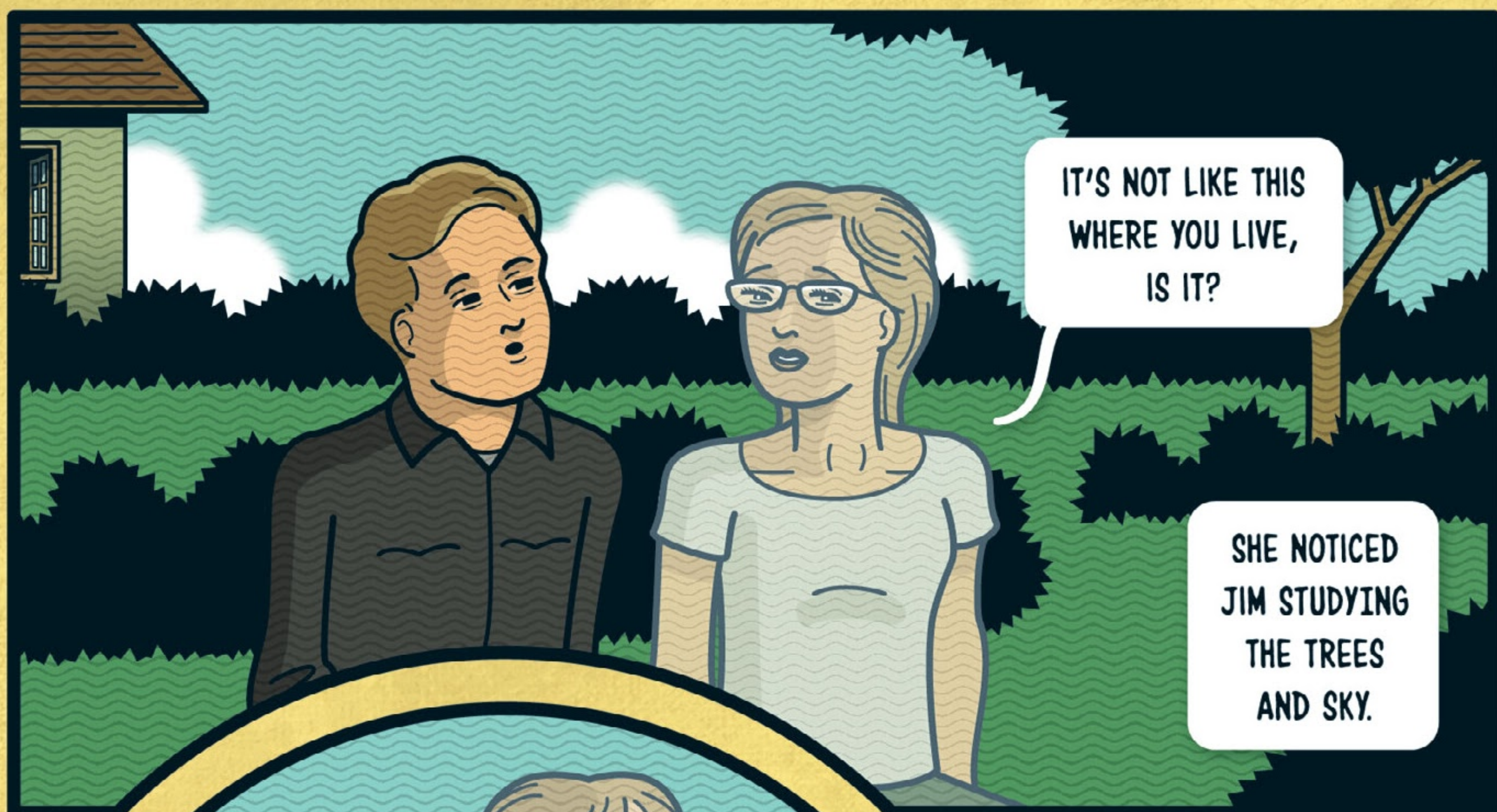
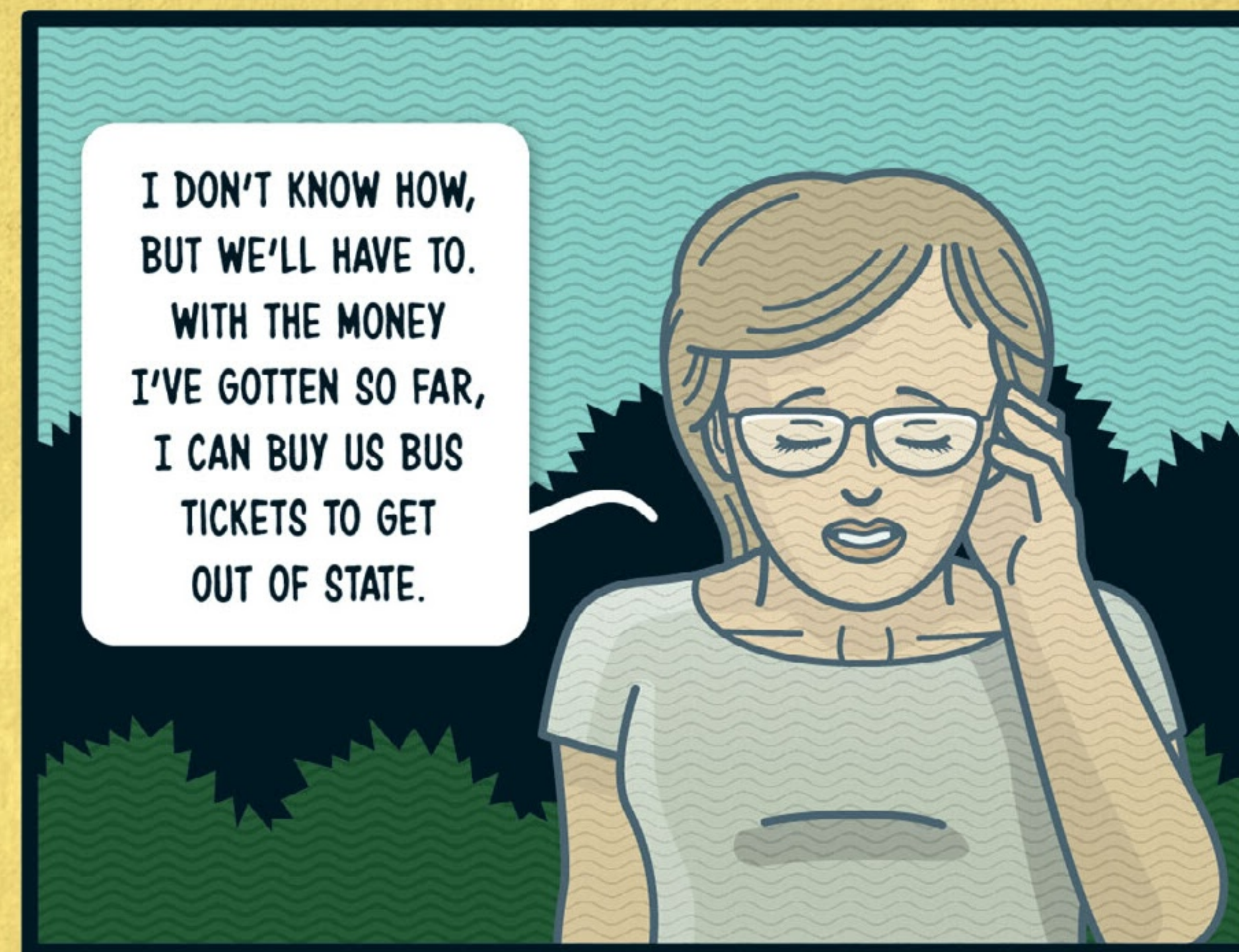
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE TIMES
I CAN DO THIS. EACH GETS WORSE
THAN THE ONE BEFORE.



THIS BOX WEIGHS THREE TIMES
AS MUCH AS THE LAST ONE...

...THEY KNOW WHERE
I LIVE. MY MOM AND
MY BROTHER, TOO.

SHE
STARTED
TO CRY.



CHAPTER 10

JIM CLEANED OFF THE TARMAC. HE SWEEPED ALL THE CIGARETTE BUTTS INTO A PILE AND SHOVELED THEM INTO THE TRASH.

IT WAS LATE IN THE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE RUSH OF CUSTOMERS FINALLY SUBSIDED.

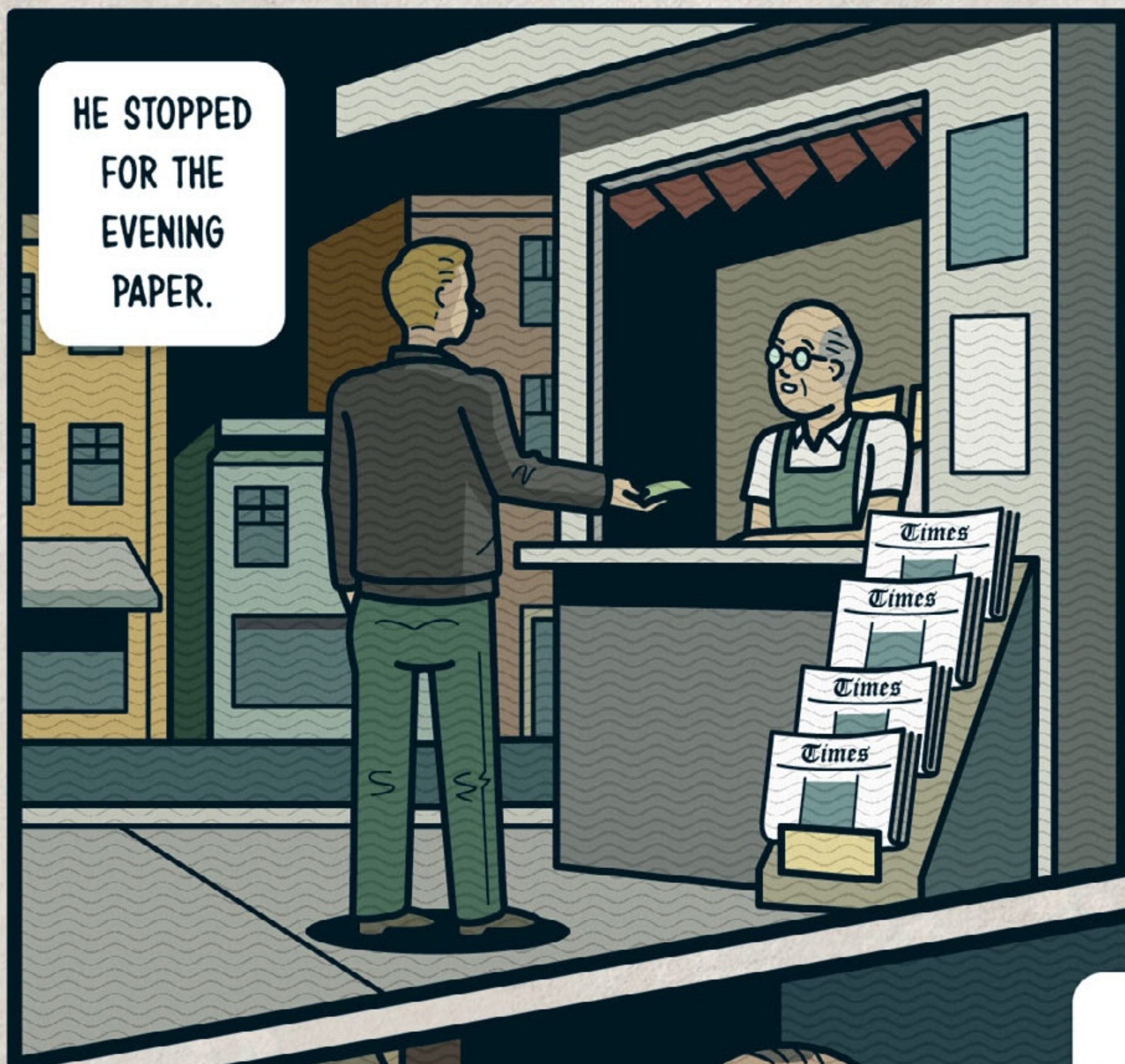
AFTER SITTING IN THE SUN ALL DAY, THE INSIDE OF HIS CAR WAS AN INFERNO.

HE DIDN'T BOTHER WITH THE RADIO...

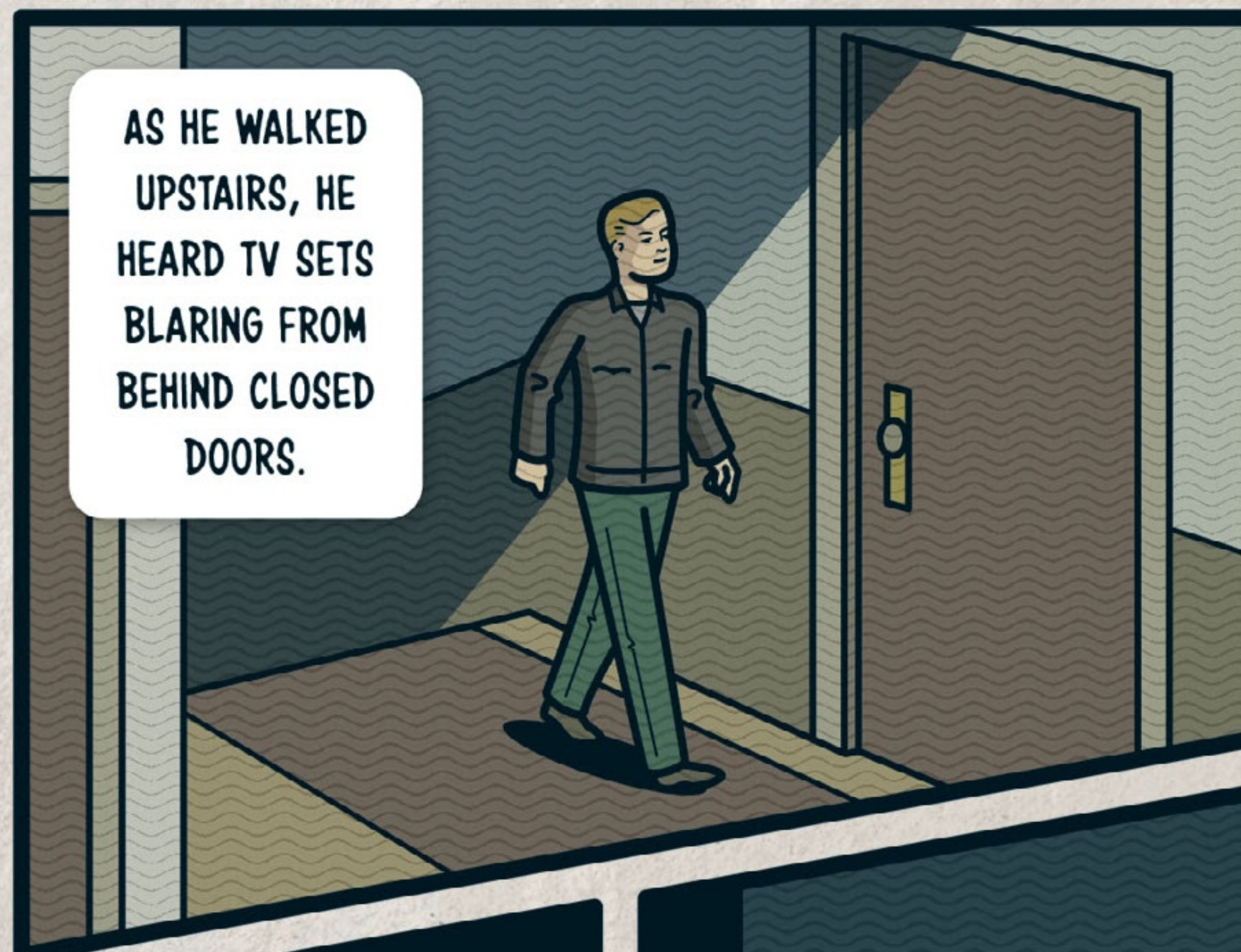
IT WAS A WARM DAY. THE BLACK SUN SHIMMERED THROUGH THE BLUE HAZE OF CAR EXHAUST.

HE COUNTED OUT THE CASH DRAWER BEFORE THE NIGHT GUY SHOWED UP.

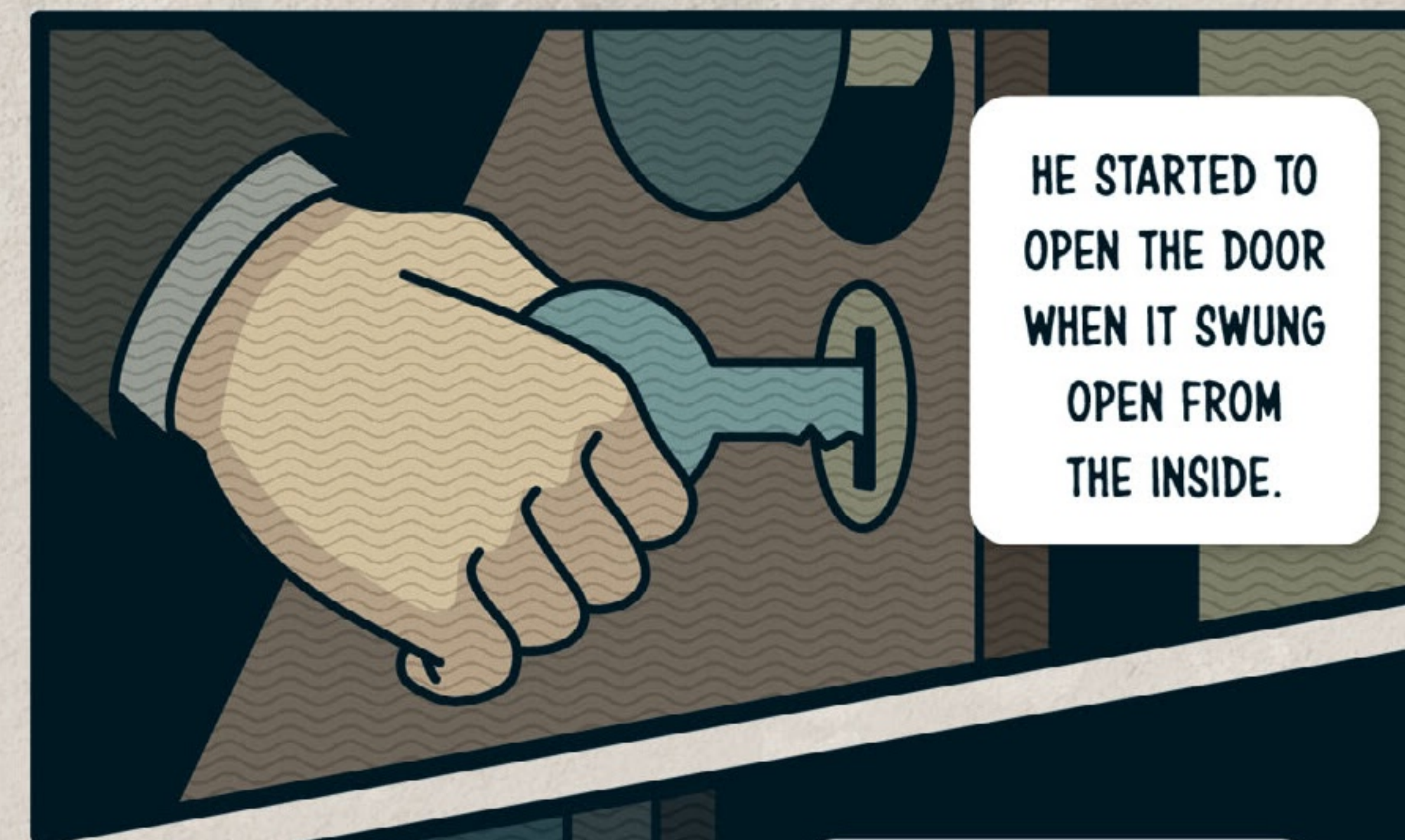
...NOT THAT IT CAME IN VERY WELL ANYWAY.



HE STOPPED
FOR THE
EVENING
PAPER.



AS HE WALKED
UPSTAIRS, HE
HEARD TV SETS
BLARING FROM
BEHIND CLOSED
DOORS.



HE STARTED TO
OPEN THE DOOR
WHEN IT SWUNG
OPEN FROM
THE INSIDE.



IN THE CENTER
OF THE ROOM STOOD
HIS PAROLE OFFICER,
ARMS CROSSED.



DON'T YOU
CHECK
YOUR MAIL?

HE TOSSED THE LETTER
TO JIM. IT WAS FROM
THE PAROLE OFFICE.

THERE WERE ALSO
DETECTIVES GOING
THROUGH JIM'S STUFF.



YOU KNOW HOW WE FEEL
ABOUT SÉANCES, RIGHT?
...AND ANY CONTACT WITH
THE LIVING AT ALL, UNDER
ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.
YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, RIGHT?



THESE "CONNECTIONS"
AREN'T SUPPOSED TO
HAPPEN. IT THROWS
EVERYTHING OUT OF
WHACK. AND WHEN
THINGS GET OUT OF
WHACK, HADES GETS
INVOLVED. AND YOU
DON'T WANT HIM MAD
AT YOU. NOT EVER.



I'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET. US COPS STAY IN TOUCH. THE AFTER LIFE P.D. AND THE L.A.P.D. HAVE WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A "RELATIONSHIP OF CONVENIENCE." IT'S GOOD FOR EVERYBODY... EVERYBODY BUT EDDIE, RAYMOND, IRIS, AND BRYAN. OH AND LINDA, TOO WE PICKED HER UP LAST NIGHT.



IRIS AND BRYAN ARE THE LUCKY ONES. THEY'RE ONLY DEAD. AS FOR THE OTHERS...FOREVER IS A LONG TIME TO SPEND IN A JAR... WITH NO BODY...JUST YOU AND YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS...ALONE.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME? I'M STILL HERE. I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.



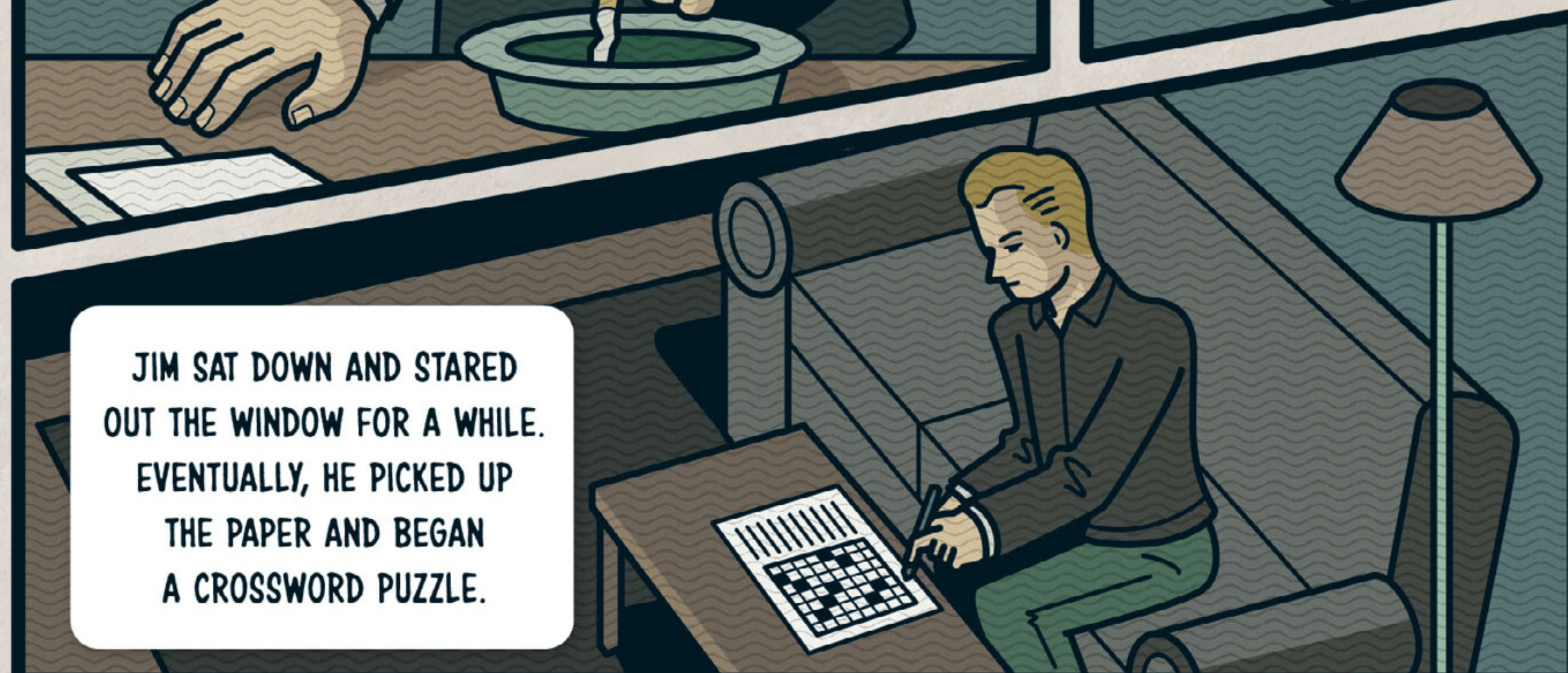
IT WASN'T YOU THAT PAID THE PRICE...THIS TIME.



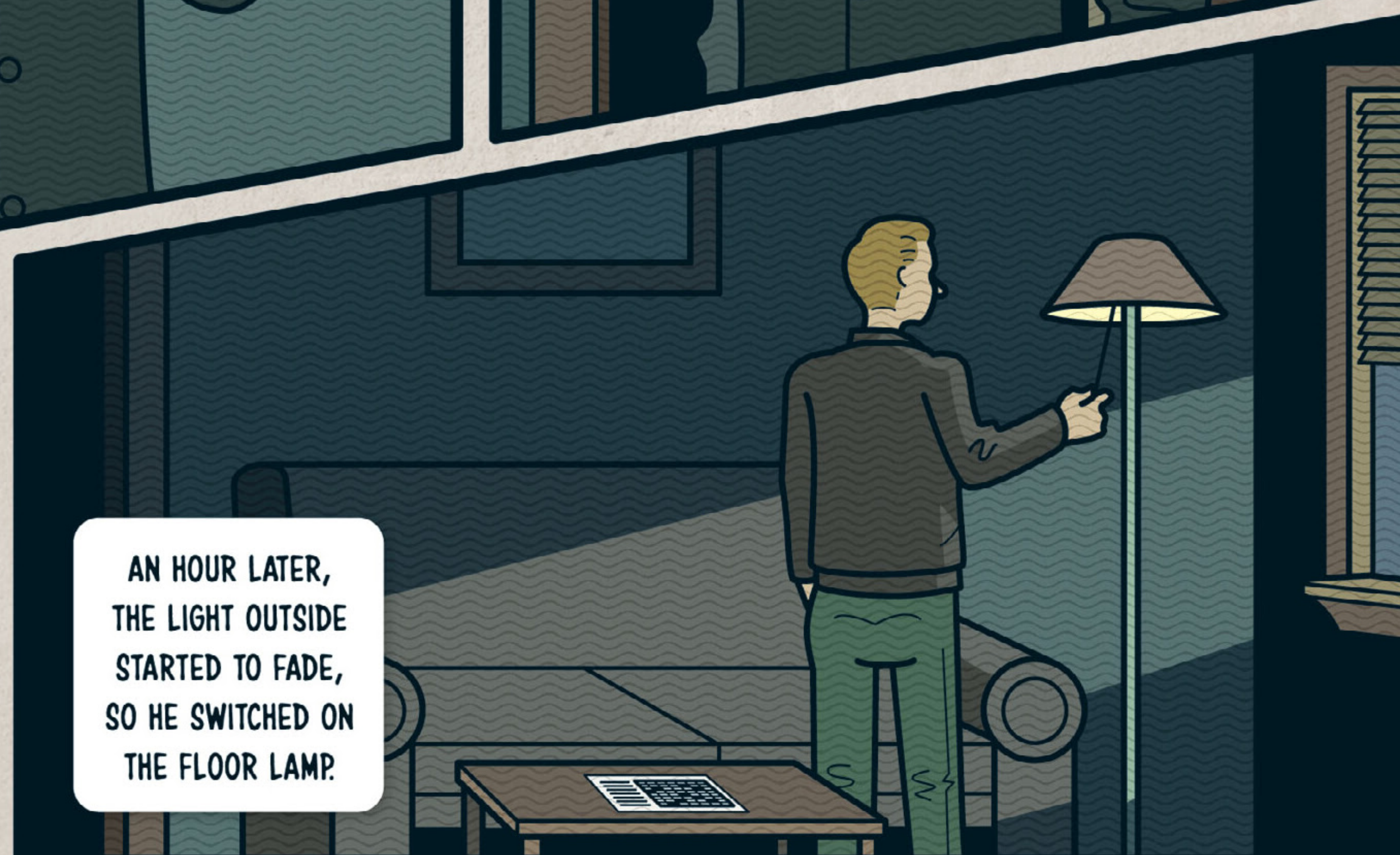
REMEMBER, JIM...



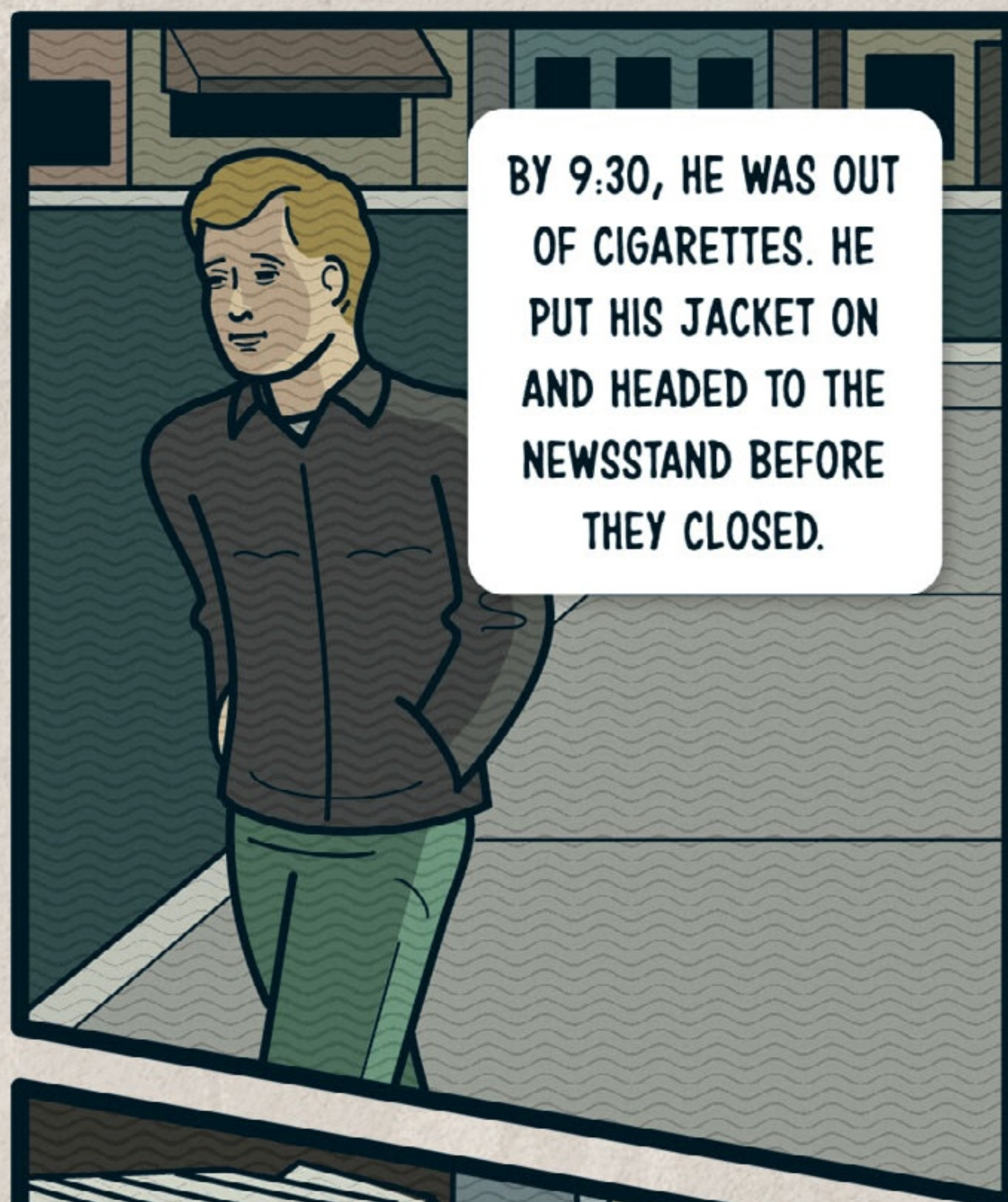
...THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN BEING DEAD.



JIM SAT DOWN AND STARED OUT THE WINDOW FOR A WHILE. EVENTUALLY, HE PICKED UP THE PAPER AND BEGAN A CROSSWORD PUZZLE.



AN HOUR LATER, THE LIGHT OUTSIDE STARTED TO FADE, SO HE SWITCHED ON THE FLOOR LAMP.



BY 9:30, HE WAS OUT OF CIGARETTES. HE PUT HIS JACKET ON AND HEADED TO THE NEWSSTAND BEFORE THEY CLOSED.



HE BOUGHT A PACK AND DECIDED TO GO FOR A WALK.



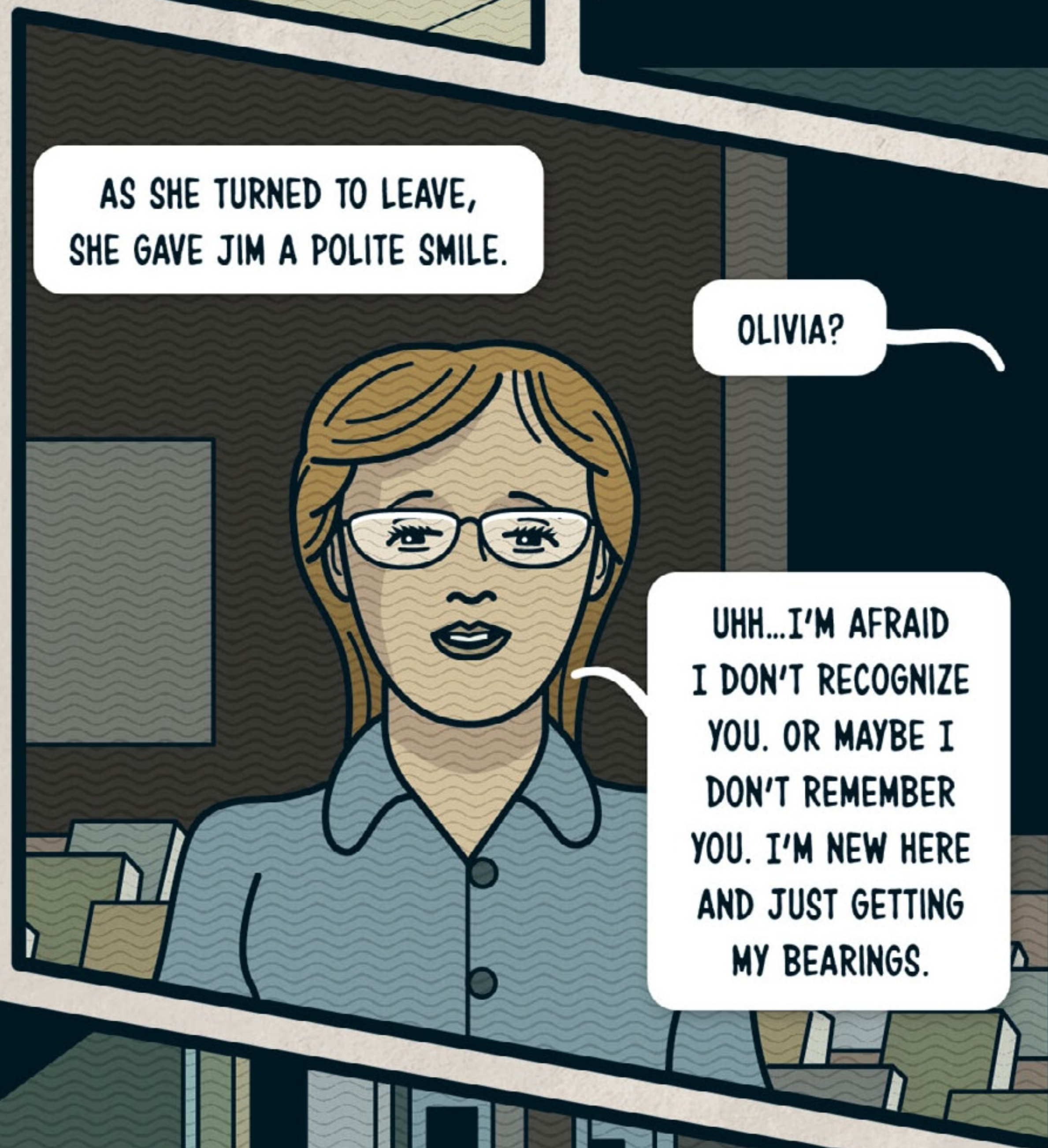
A POLICE CAR IDLED AT THE CURB. THE OFFICER WATCHED HIM AS HE WALKED BY.



UP AHEAD, HE SAW THE LIGHTS WERE ON IN THE USED BOOKSTORE.



A YOUNG WOMAN STOOD AT THE COUNTER.



AS SHE TURNED TO LEAVE, SHE GAVE JIM A POLITE SMILE.

OLIVIA?

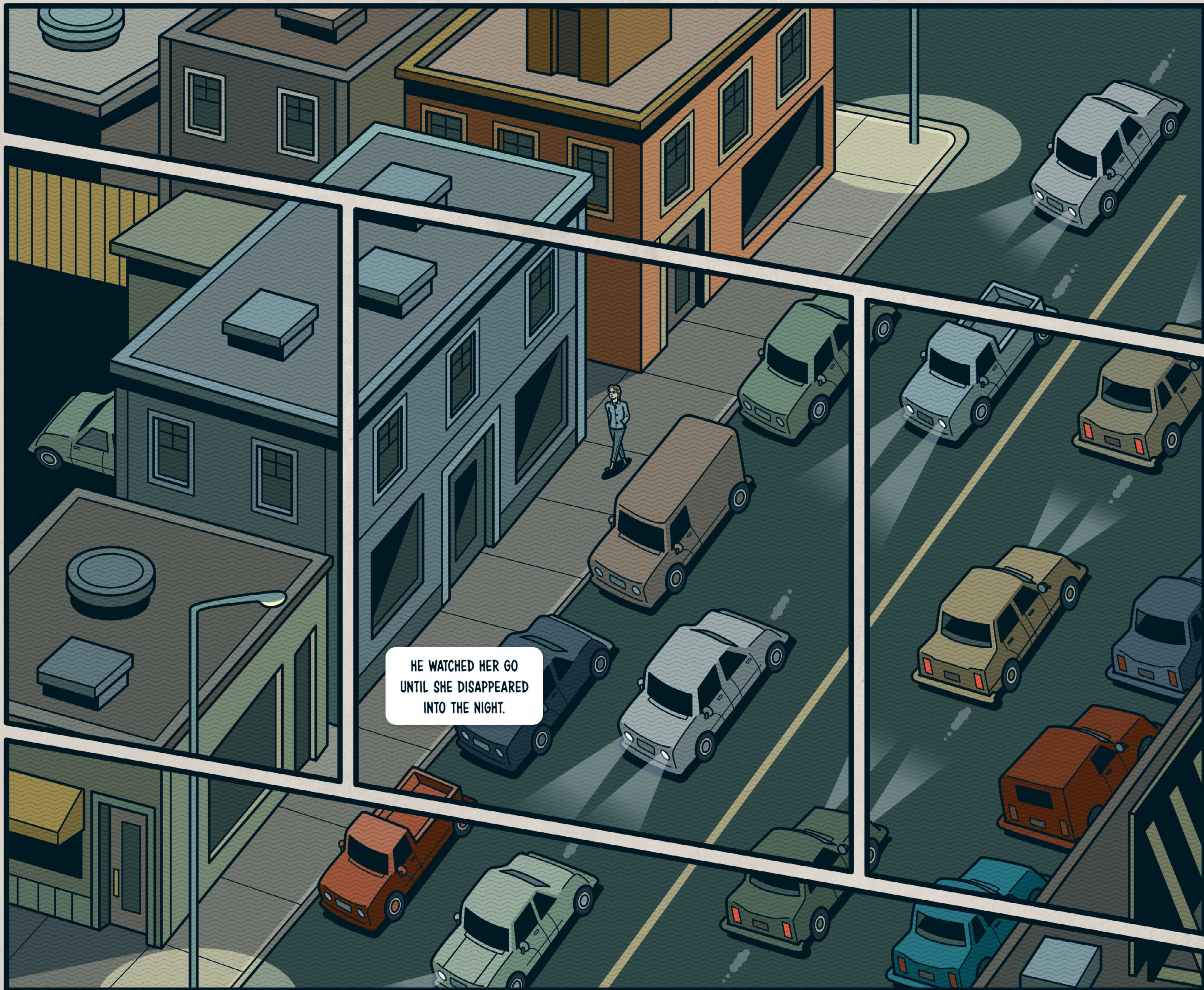
UHH...I'M AFRAID I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU. OR MAYBE I DON'T REMEMBER YOU. I'M NEW HERE AND JUST GETTING MY BEARINGS.



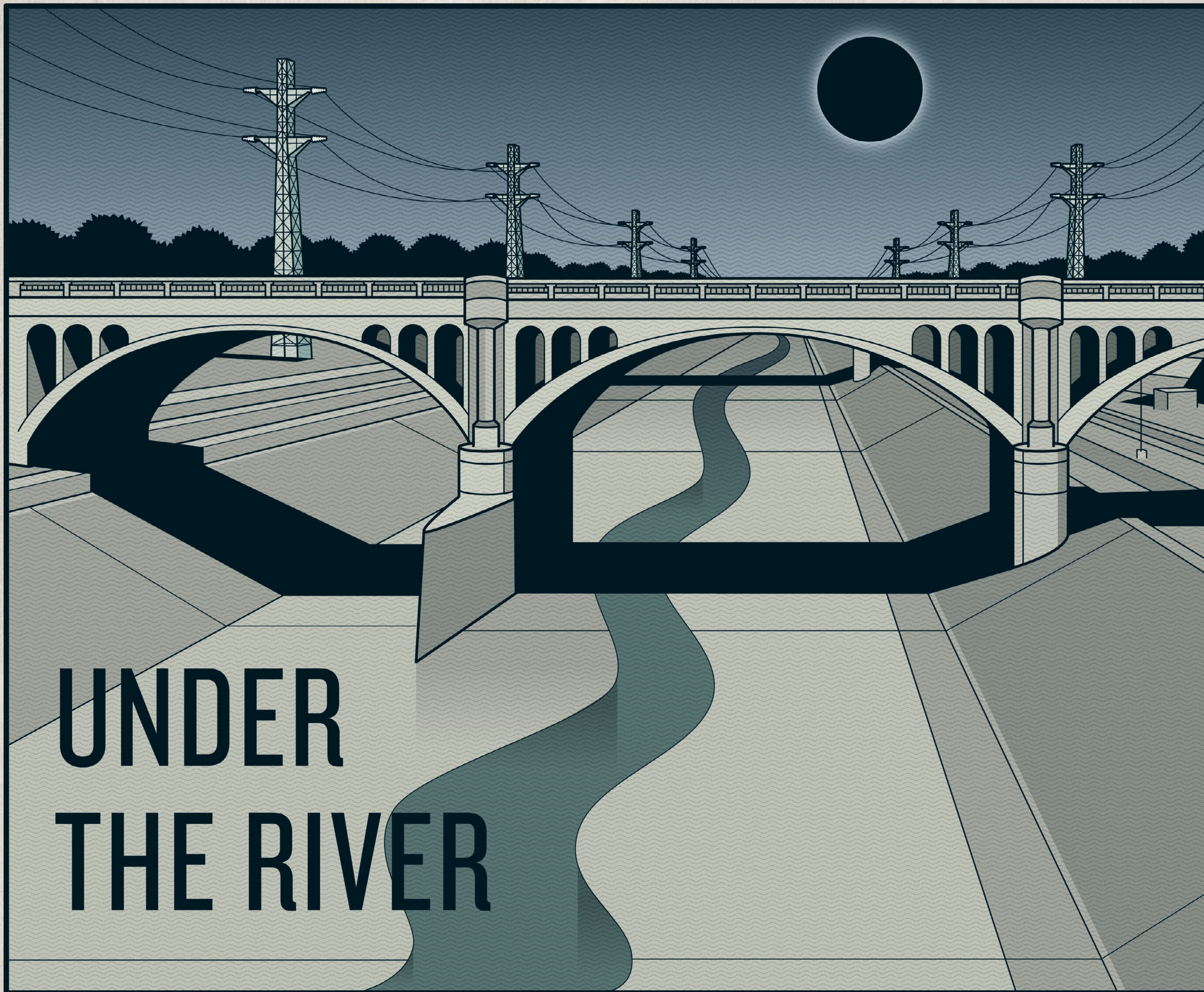
IT'S OKAY. WE MET ONCE OR TWICE. A LONG TIME AGO.



AS SHE WENT OUT THE DOOR, OLIVIA TURNED TO JIM, AND FOR A MOMENT, IT SEEMED AS IF SHE WAS ABOUT TO SPEAK. BUT INSTEAD, SHE WALKED ON.



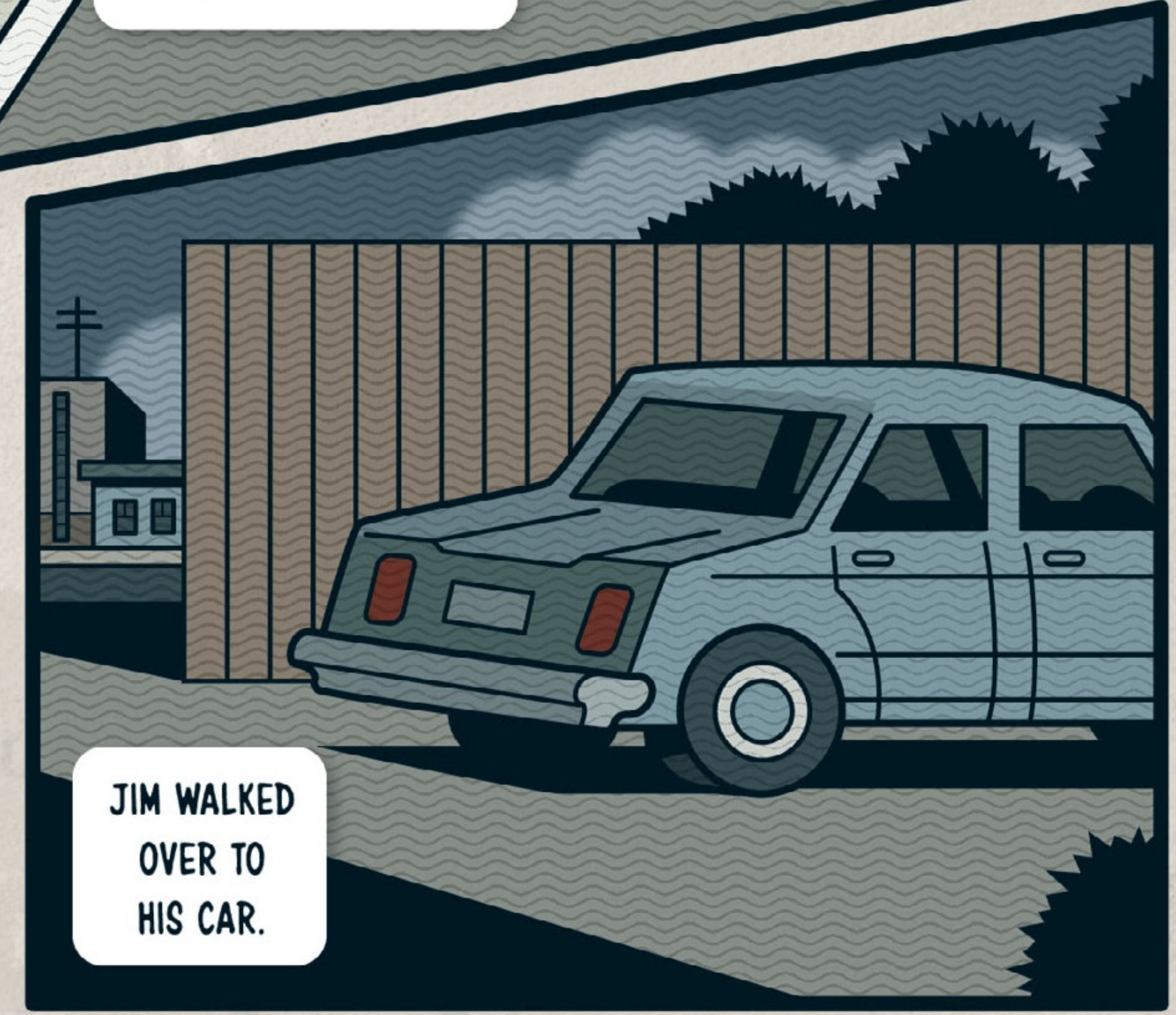
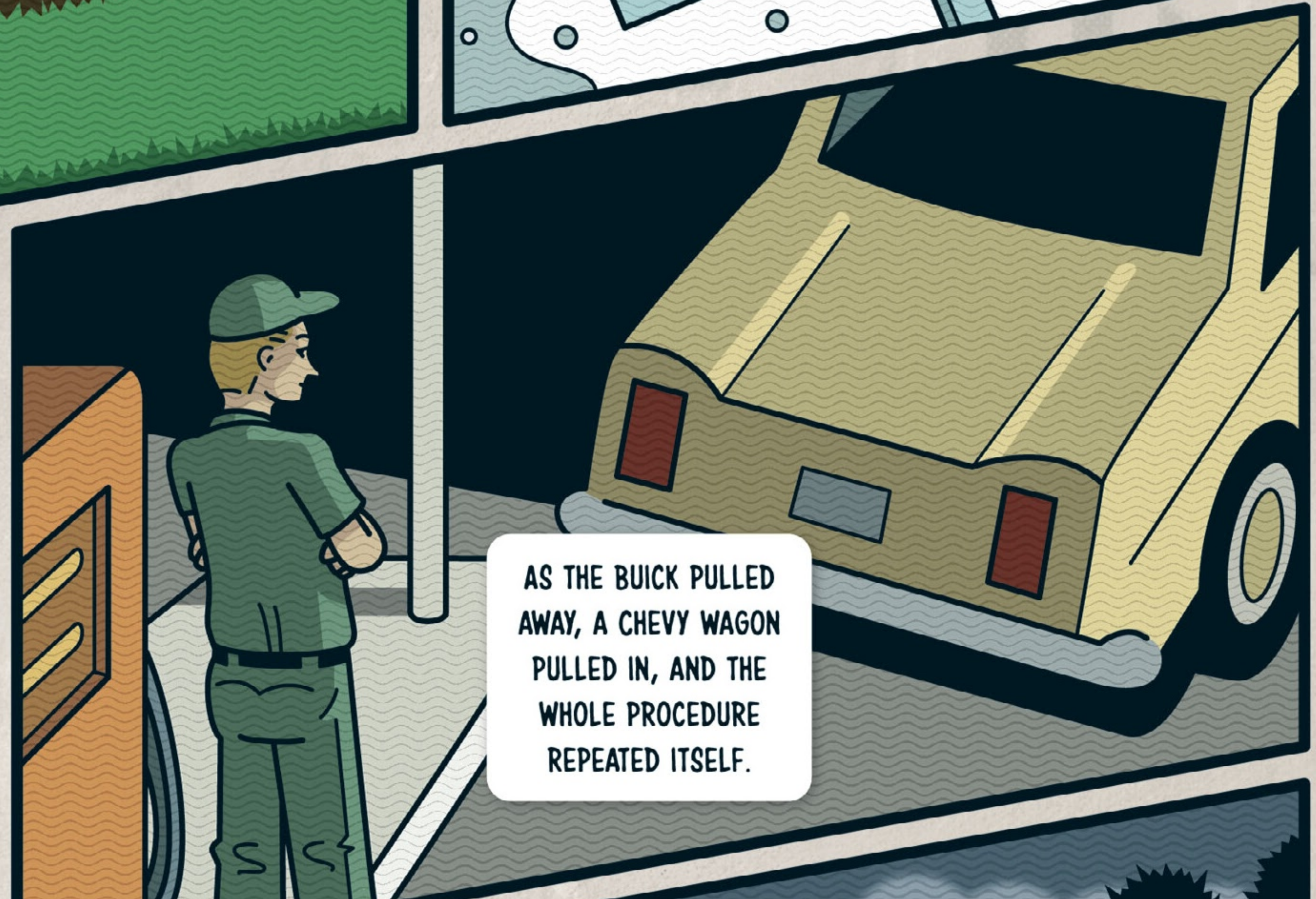
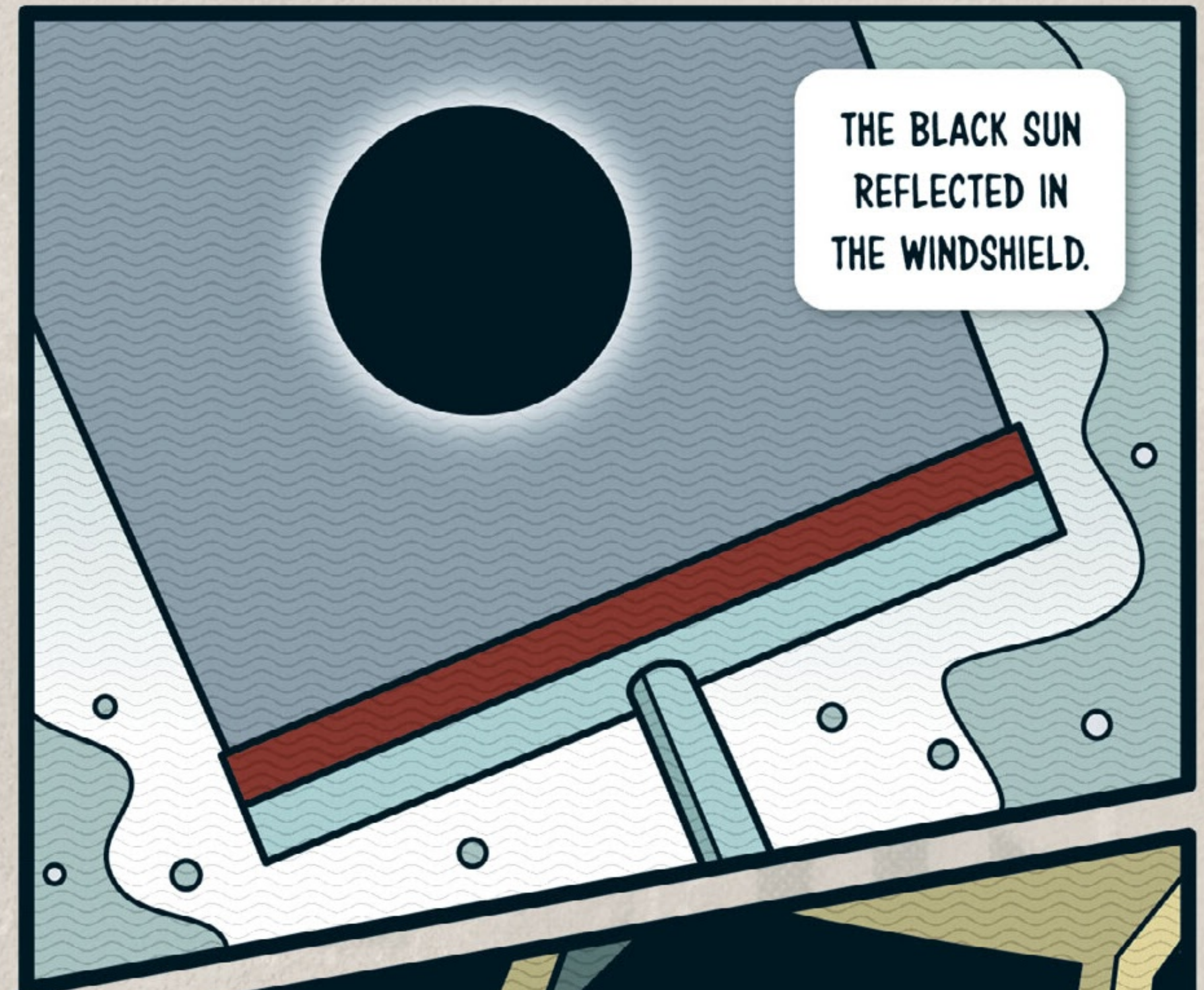
HE WATCHED HER GO
UNTIL SHE DISAPPEARED
INTO THE NIGHT.



**UNDER
THE RIVER**

CHAPTER 11

NEXT RIGHT





HE STOPPED AT THE NEWSSTAND,
PICKED UP THE EVENING PAPER,
AND WALKED ON TO HIS APARTMENT.



THE LOBBY WAS EMPTY, BUT HE HEARD
THE MUFFLED TV SOUNDS COMING FROM
BEHIND THE APARTMENT DOORS.
HE CHECKED HIS MAILBOX. NOTHING.



HE SAT AT THE
KITCHEN TABLE
AND BEGAN TO
LOOK OVER THE
CROSSWORD.

BY THE TIME HE'D
FINISHED THE PAPER,
IT WAS GETTING DARK.
HE DECIDED TO HEAD OUT.



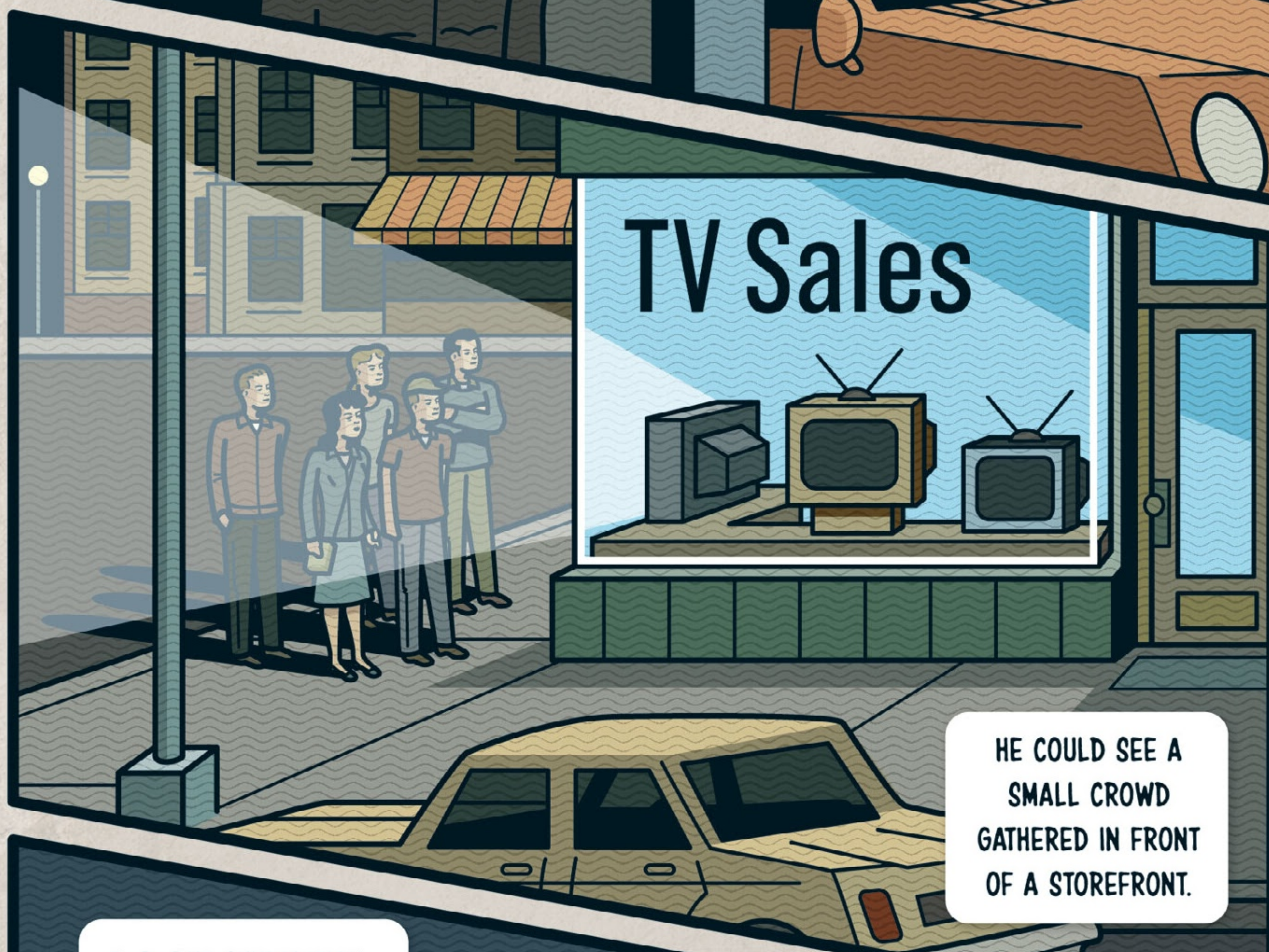
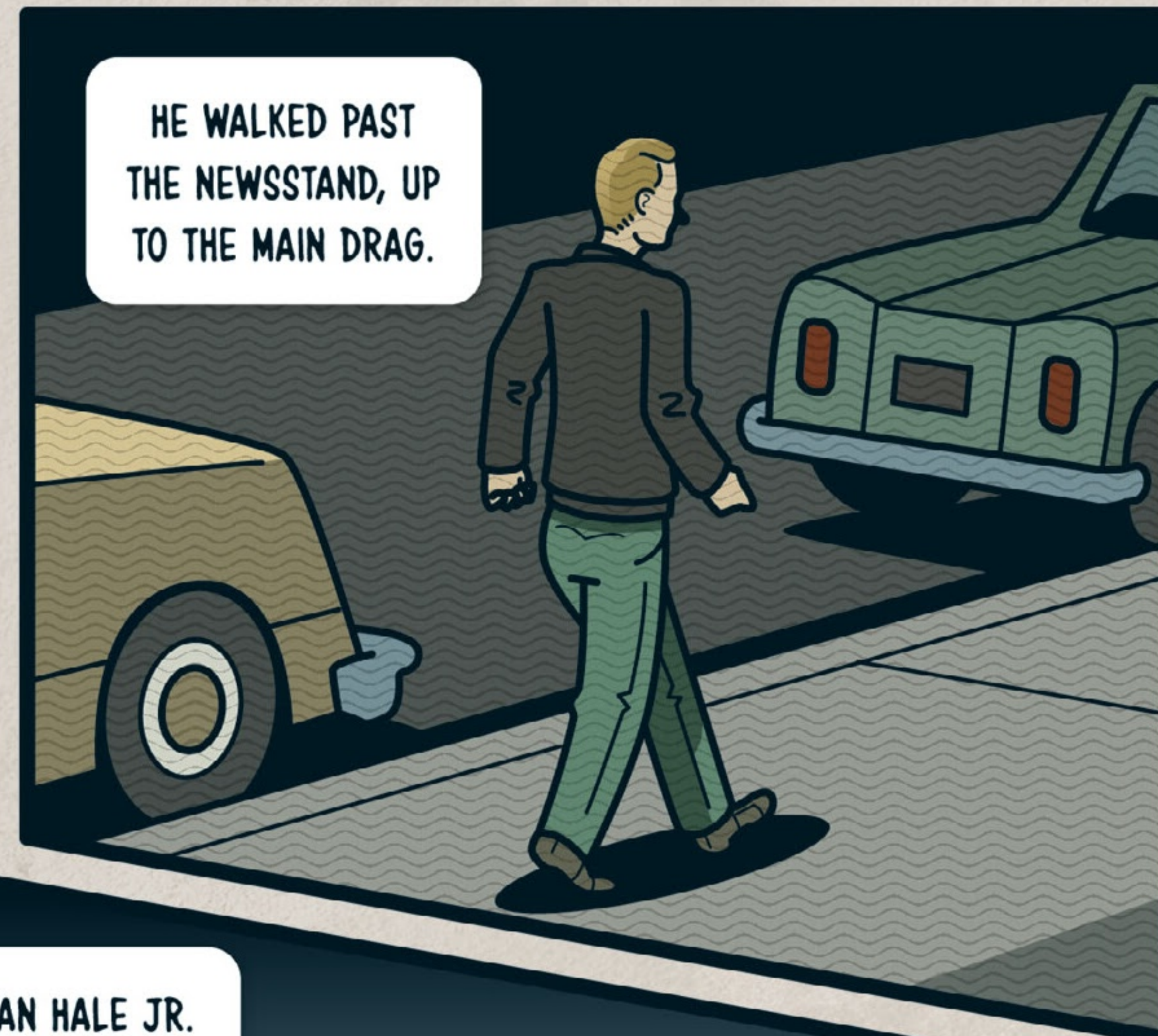
AS JIM WALKED ACROSS THE LOBBY,
HE SAW A WOMAN STRUGGLING TO
OPEN THE DOOR. HER ARMS WERE
FILLED WITH DRY CLEANING BAGS.



HE HELD
THE DOOR
FOR HER,
AND SHE
SMILED
AT HIM.

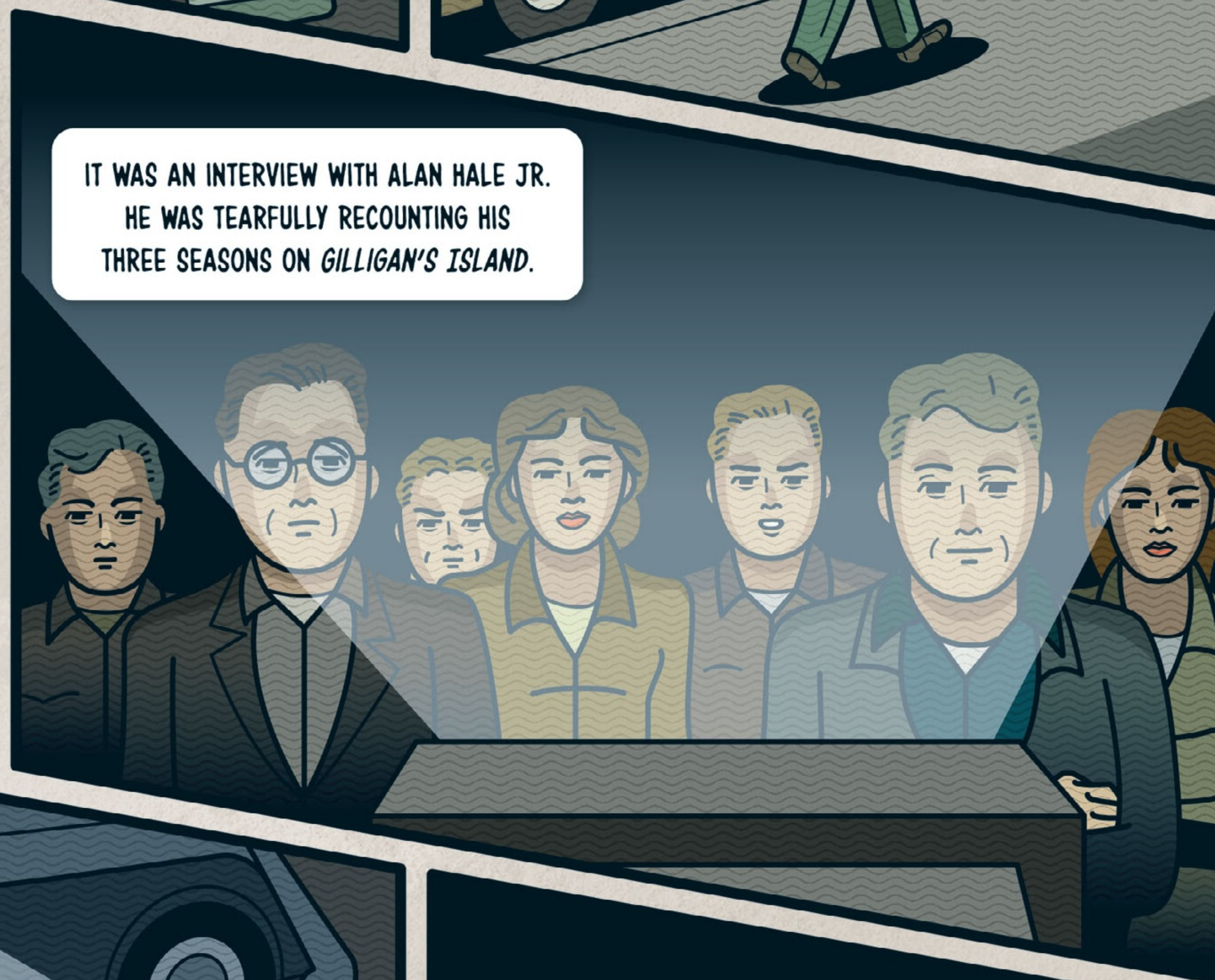


HE WALKED PAST
THE NEWSSTAND, UP
TO THE MAIN DRAG.



HE COULD SEE A
SMALL CROWD
GATHERED IN FRONT
OF A STOREFRONT.

IT WAS AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN HALE JR.
HE WAS TEARFULLY RECOUNTING HIS
THREE SEASONS ON *GILLIGAN'S ISLAND*.



B-B-BUT SYNDICATION...
SYNDICATION BROUGHT
US BACK. IT WAS A
MIRACLE. WE WERE
MORE POPULAR
THAN EVER.



A POLICE CRUISER
SLOWLY WENT BY.





THE CIGARETTE MAN STOPPED BY IN THE MORNING. HE OPENED THE MACHINE AND SLID FRESH PACKS INTO THE VERTICAL SLOTS.

I'LL BE BACK AT THE END OF THE WEEK.



JIM SELDOM HEARD MORE THAN "FILL IT UP" OR "CHECK THE OIL."



CUSTOMERS HAD NOTHING MORE TO SAY, AND THAT SUITED HIM FINE.



SOMETIMES AFTER WORK, JIM WOULD SEE OLIVIA. SHE MUST HAVE GOTTEN AN APARTMENT IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD.

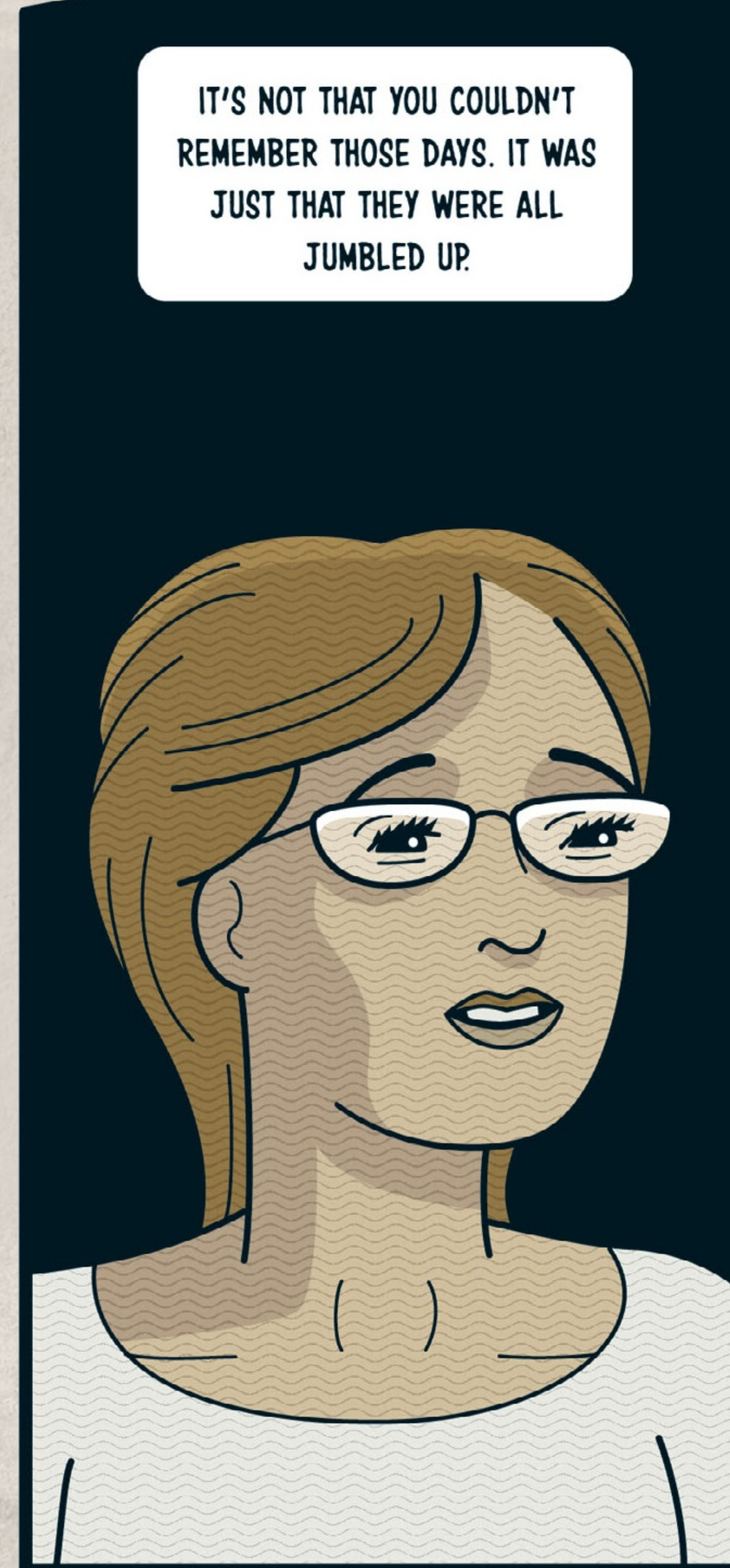


HE HADN'T SPOKEN TO HER SINCE HE HAD RUN INTO HER AT THE BOOKSTORE. HE DOUBTED SHE WOULD REMEMBER ANYTHING MORE.



NOT ONLY WAS THE MOMENT OF DEATH ERASED FROM MEMORY...

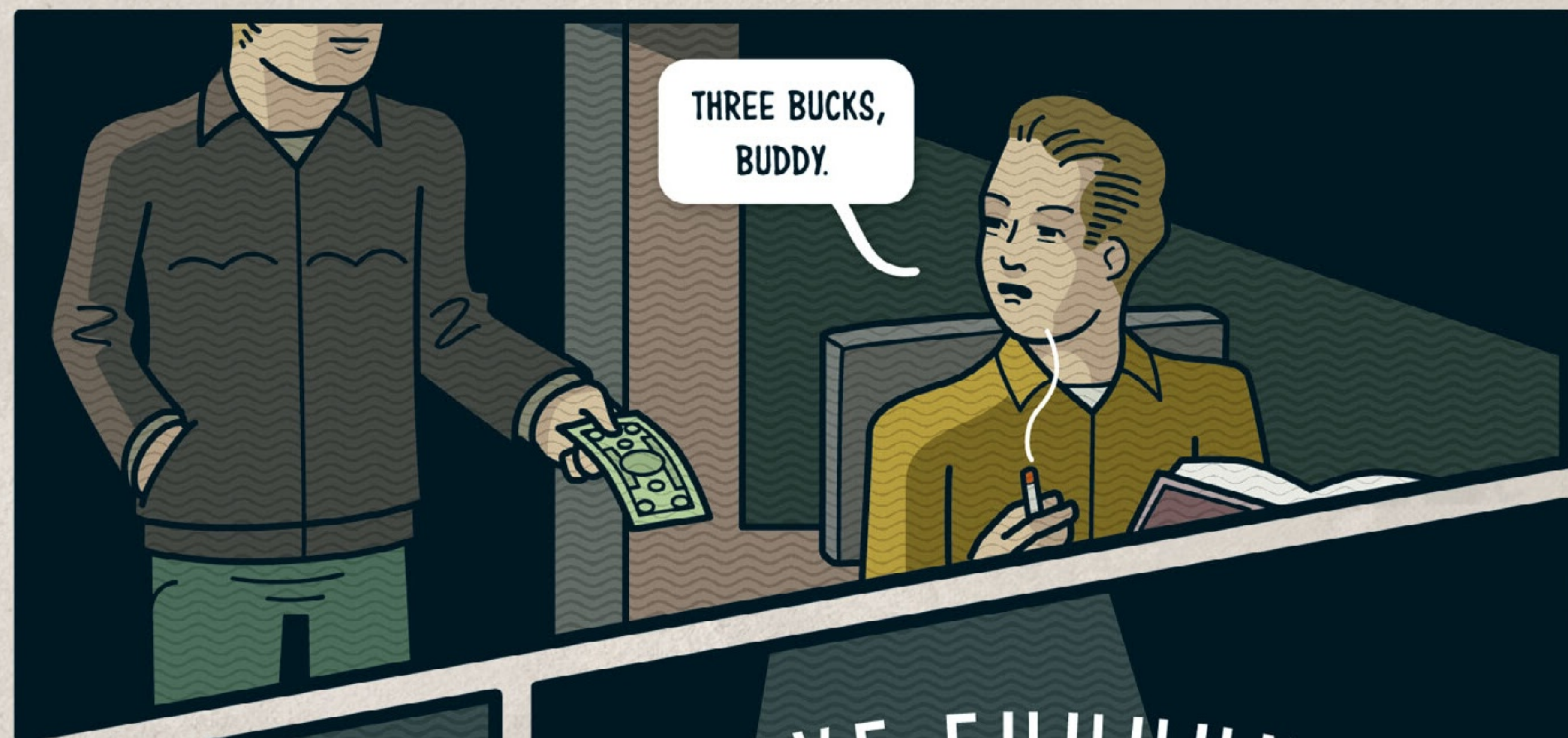
...THE DAYS AND WEEKS LEADING UP TO IT WERE ALSO OBSCURED.



IT'S NOT THAT YOU COULDN'T REMEMBER THOSE DAYS. IT WAS JUST THAT THEY WERE ALL JUMBLED UP.



ONE NIGHT, JIM WALKED OVER TO THE ECHO. HE HADN'T BEEN THERE IN A WHILE. THE SAME GUY SAT AT THE DOOR, LOOKING BORED.



THREE BUCKS, BUDDY.

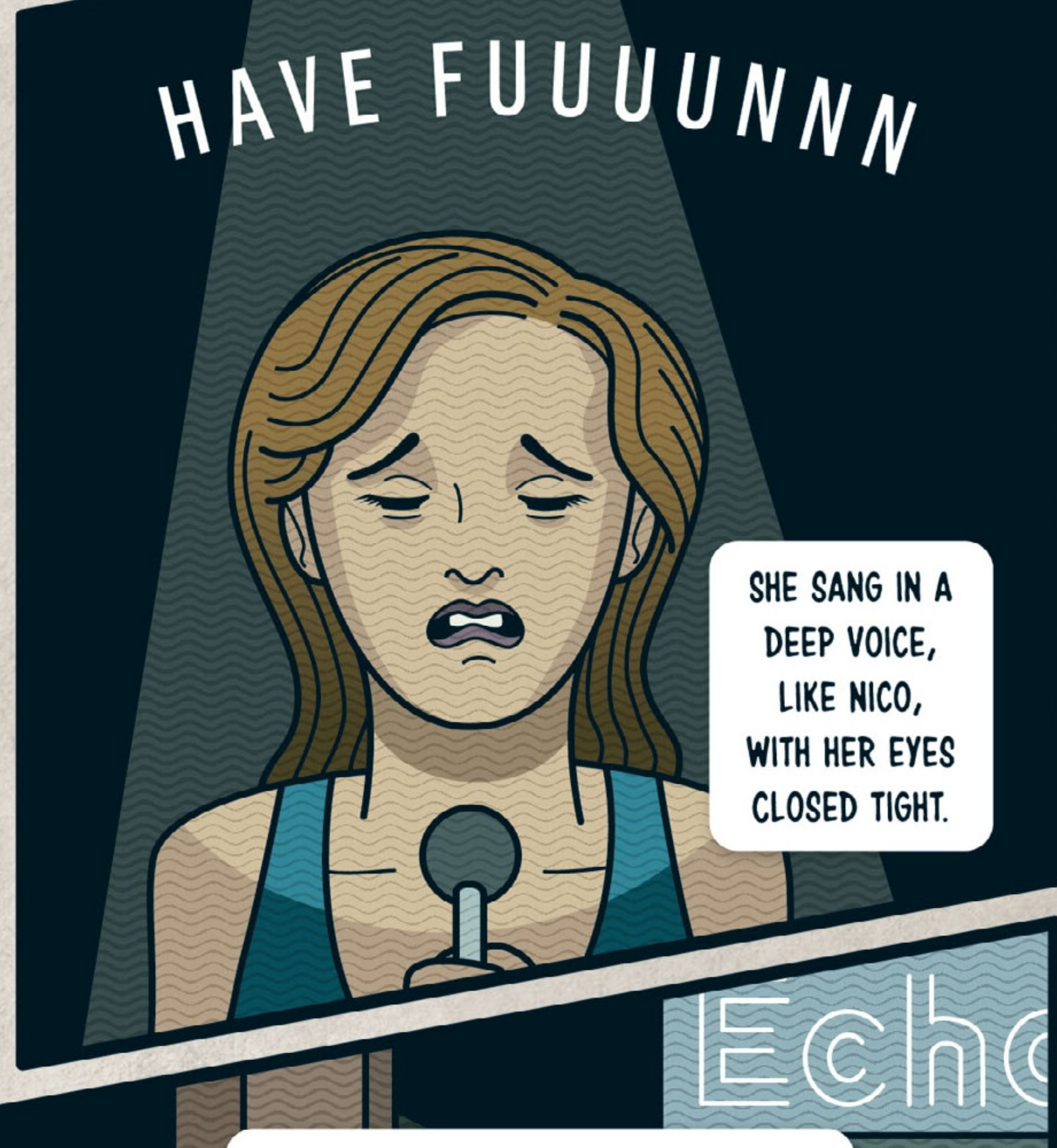


IRIS WAS ONSTAGE SINGING "GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN" IN A FUNERARY TEMPO.



IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE IRONIC--LIKE CABARET.

JIM GLANCED OVER. WANDA HAD SAT DOWN NEXT TO HIM.



SHE SANG IN A DEEP VOICE, LIKE NICO, WITH HER EYES CLOSED TIGHT.



AFTER A FEW MORE SONGS, JIM SAID GOODNIGHT TO WANDA AND WALKED OUT.



ROBERT HAZARD. THAT'S THE GUY THAT WROTE "GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN." IT WAS HIS ONLY BIG HIT.

FROM PHILLY.

FUCKIN' PHILLY.

AS HE TURNED
DOWN HIS STREET,
A SEDAN PULLED UP.

IT WAS HIS P.O.,
AND HE WAVED
JIM OVER.

HE MOTIONED FOR
JIM TO GET IN.

YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED
THAT WE'VE HAD YOU
UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

YOU MEAN THE TWO GUYS OUTSIDE
MY BUILDING? IF YOU WANT TO LOOK
THROUGH MY PLACE AGAIN, FEEL FREE.

IT WAS LATE
AND EVEN THE
TRAFFIC HAD
SLOWED DOWN.

WHEN WE COLLARED EDDIE
AND LINDA'S OPERATION,
WE LEARNED SOME THINGS.
BUT THERE WERE STILL
A FEW OTHER THINGS THAT
I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT...
MEANING YOU, JIM.

I WASN'T INVOLVED
WITH EDDIE. HE WAS
EXTORTING ME...

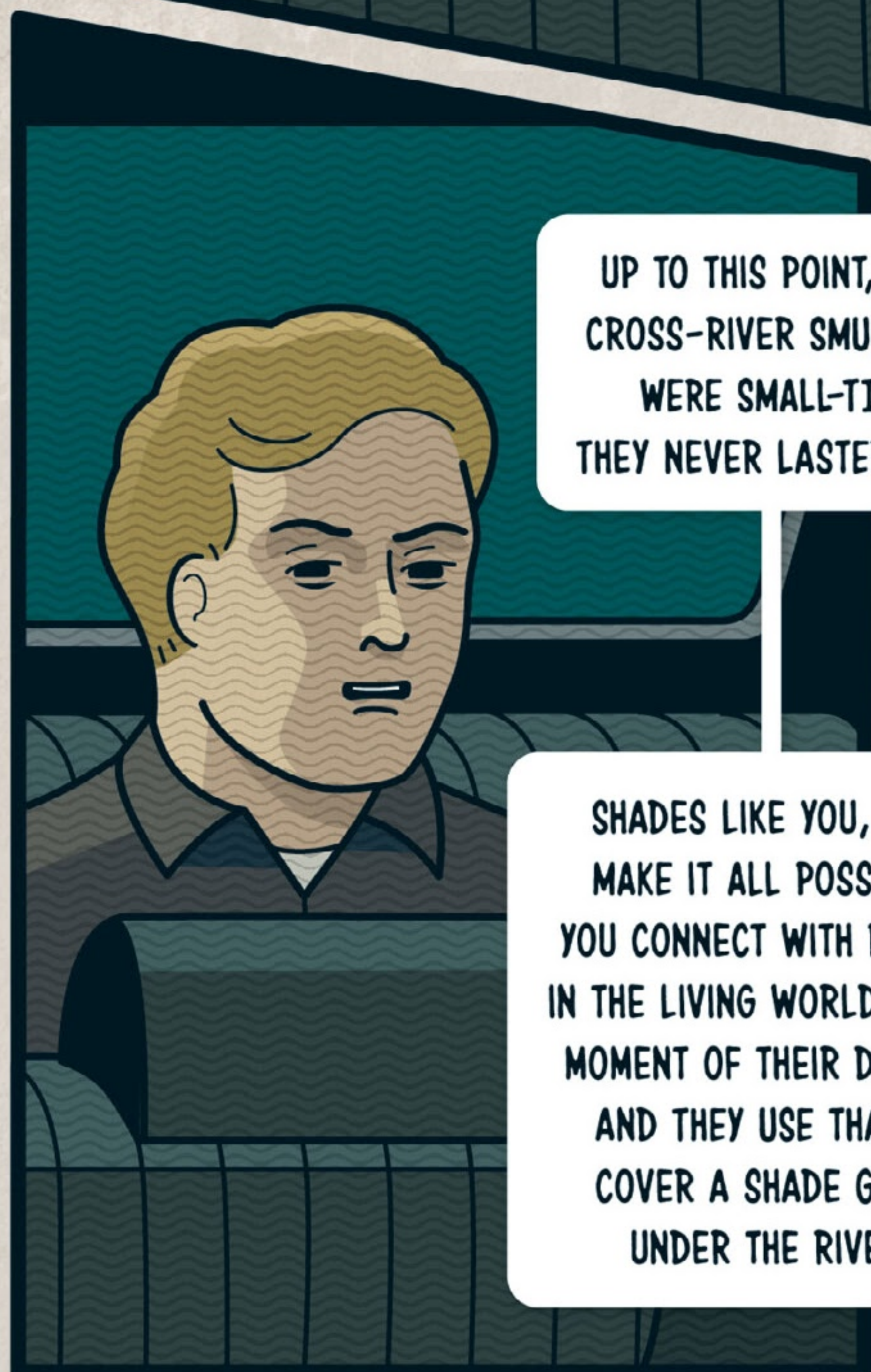
YOU'RE A CONNECTOR.
AND I HAD TO FIND OUT
WHICH SIDE YOU WERE ON.

DON'T WORRY. WHILE
YOU WERE AT WORK,
WE DID JUST THAT.

SCREEEE



I'M ON MY SIDE.
AND I DON'T WANT
TO BE INVOLVED
WITH ANYONE ELSE.



UP TO THIS POINT, MOST
CROSS-RIVER SMUGGLERS
WERE SMALL-TIME.
THEY NEVER LASTED LONG.



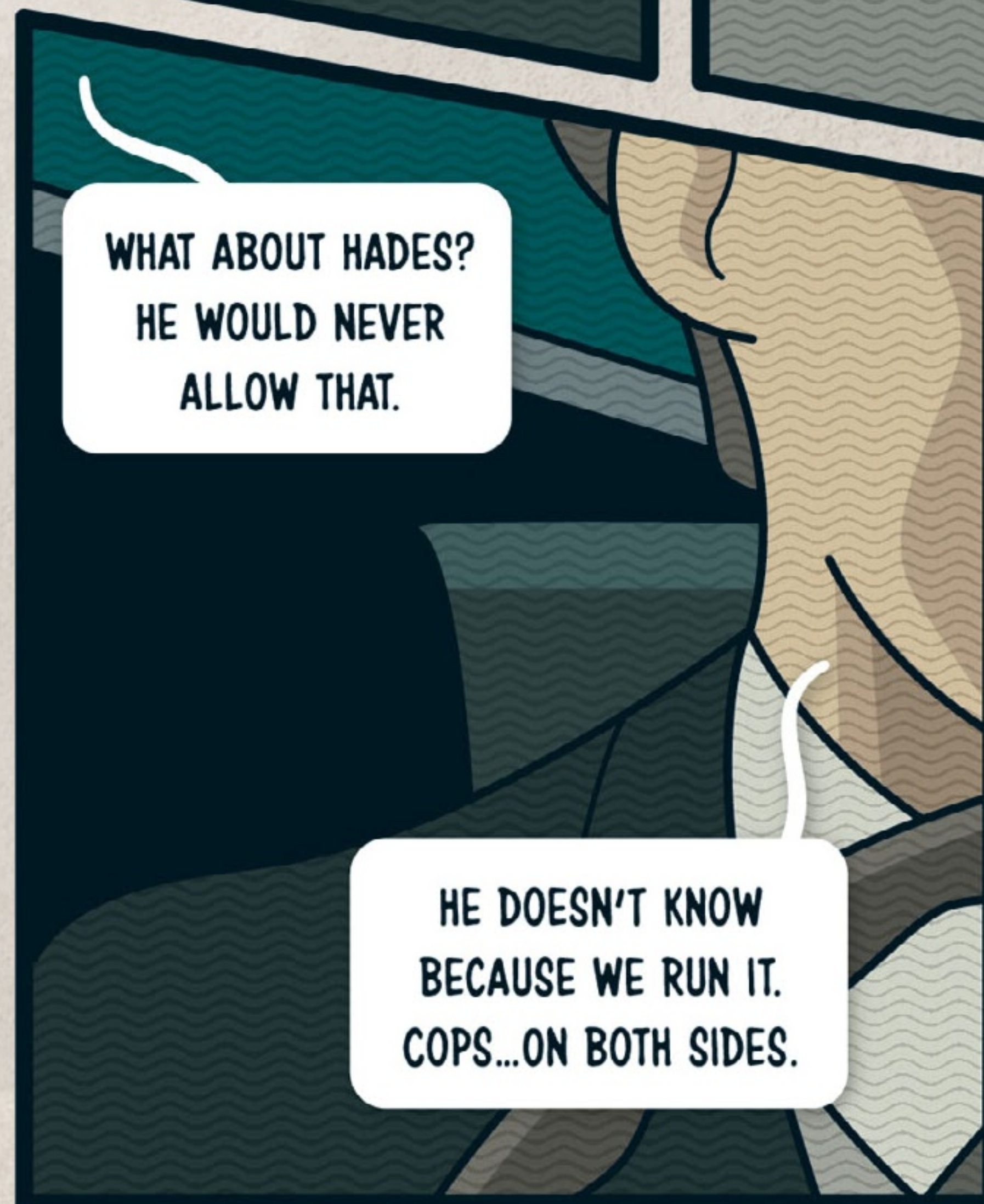
SHADES LIKE YOU, JIM,
MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE.
YOU CONNECT WITH PEOPLE
IN THE LIVING WORLD AT THE
MOMENT OF THEIR DEATHS,
AND THEY USE THAT TO
COVER A SHADE GOING
UNDER THE RIVER.



THE GOOD NEWS IS
YOU'RE NOT PROFITING
FROM THESE CRIMINAL
ELEMENTS. THAT I
KNOW FOR SURE.

THE BAD NEWS IS,
YOU DON'T HAVE
MUCH SAY ABOUT
WHAT HAPPENS
NEXT. BECAUSE...
I NEED YOU.

HE QUICKLY JERKED
THE CAR INTO A
DIMLY LIT GARAGE.



WHAT ABOUT HADES?
HE WOULD NEVER
ALLOW THAT.

HE DOESN'T KNOW
BECAUSE WE RUN IT.
COPS...ON BOTH SIDES.



THE METAL DOOR
SLAMMED DOWN
BEHIND THEM.

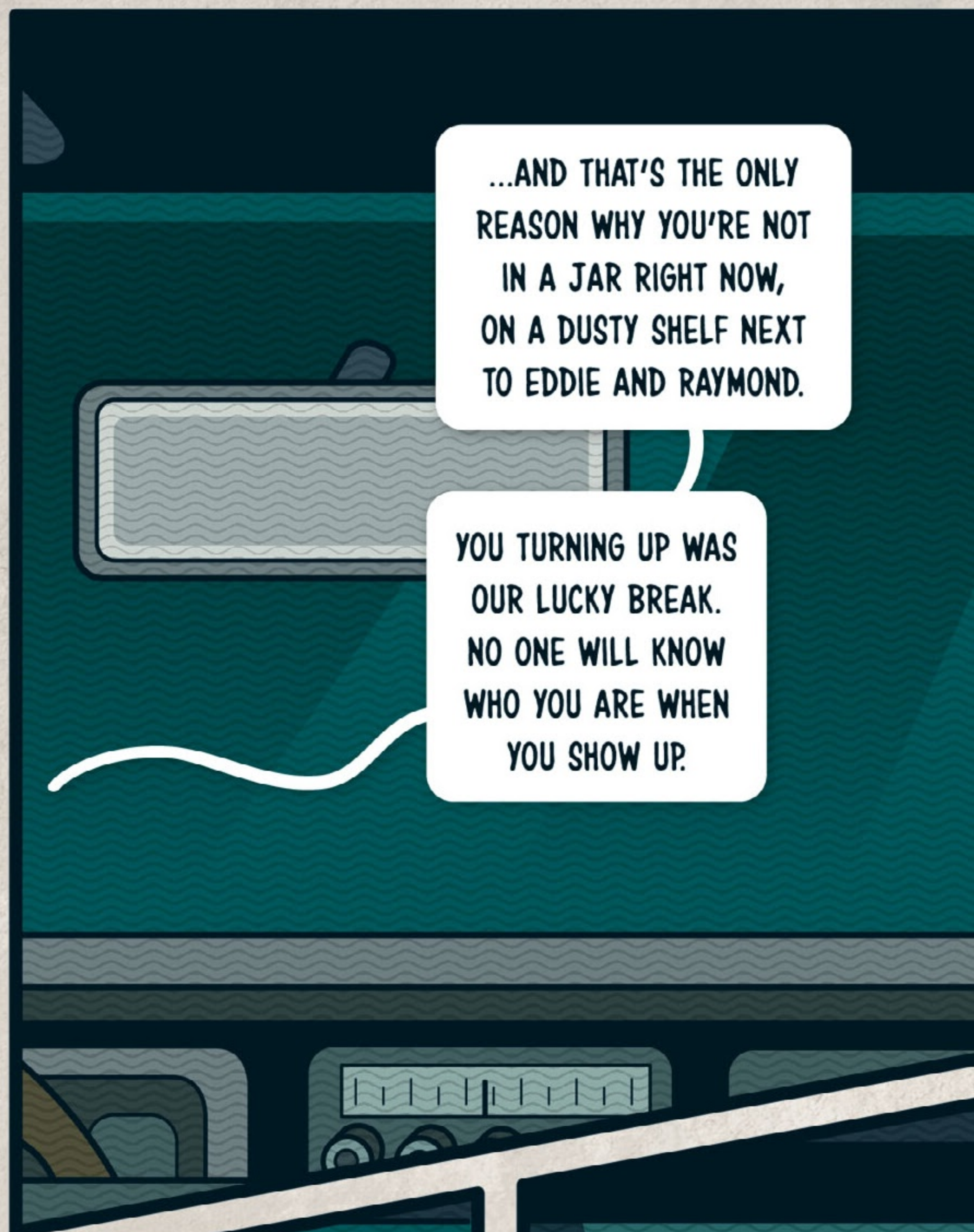
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT THE A.L.P.D.
WE HAVE AN ONGOING
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE L.A.P.D.
BASED ON SOME OVERLAPPING
INTERESTS IN OUR
RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS.



WE KEEP IT REGULATED
AND DISCREET. IF HADES
EVER FOUND OUT, WE'D
ALL BE VAPED.



YOU'RE A STRONG CONNECTION, JIM.
AND YOU'RE UNTAINTED. NO ONE
KNOWS ABOUT YOU BECAUSE I KEPT
YOUR NAME OUT OF IT...



...AND THAT'S THE ONLY
REASON WHY YOU'RE NOT
IN A JAR RIGHT NOW,
ON A DUSTY SHELF NEXT
TO EDDIE AND RAYMOND.

YOU TURNING UP WAS
OUR LUCKY BREAK.
NO ONE WILL KNOW
WHO YOU ARE WHEN
YOU SHOW UP.



WHEN I
SHOW UP...
WHERE?



YOU'RE GOING BACK
TO LOS ANGELES, TO
RECONNECT THINGS
FROM THAT END FOR US.
WE'VE HAD SOME
PERSONNEL PROBLEMS,
AND YOU'RE THE
CONNECTOR WHO CAN
FIX THAT.



JIM LEANED BACK
IN HIS SEAT AND
LOOKED OUT AT THE
LIT-UP EXIT SIGN
ACROSS THE WAY.
IT LOOKED VERY
FAR AWAY.



HE WAS LOOKING OUT
THE OFFICE WINDOW
WHEN OLIVIA
PULLED IN.

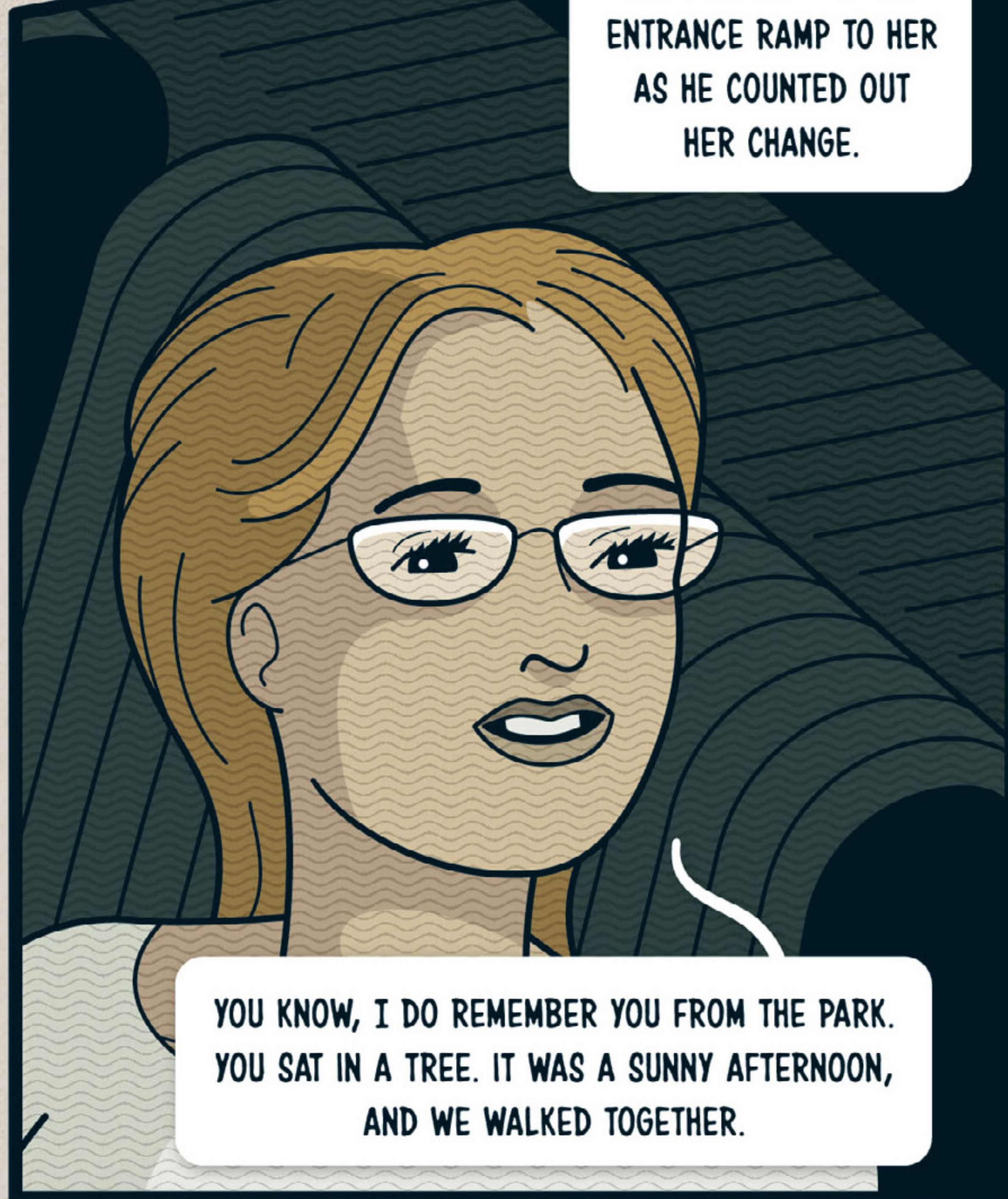
IT WAS A GRAY AFTERNOON,
AND JIM HAD BEEN
PUMPING GAS FOR
THREE HOURS STRAIGHT.

SHE SMILED AGAIN AS
SHE PUT THE CAR INTO
GEAR AND PULLED
AWAY INTO TRAFFIC.



SHE LEANED HER HEAD OUT
AND ASKED WHERE
THE ENTRANCE TO THE
FREEWAY WAS.

I'M STILL SORTA
FIGURING MY
WAY AROUND.



JIM POINTED OUT THE
ENTRANCE RAMP TO HER
AS HE COUNTED OUT
HER CHANGE.

YOU KNOW, I DO REMEMBER YOU FROM THE PARK.
YOU SAT IN A TREE. IT WAS A SUNNY AFTERNOON,
AND WE WALKED TOGETHER.



JIM WAS STUNNED.
SHE REMEMBERED
HIM FROM BEFORE.

HE HADN'T NOTICED THAT A CAR HAD PULLED UP ALONGSIDE HIM AS HE WATCHED OLIVIA'S CAR FADE INTO THE SEA OF TRAFFIC.

HE THEN HEARD THE FAMILIAR VOICE OF HIS P.O.

IT'S FIVE O'CLOCK. NOW GET IN THE CAR.

ON THEIR WAY TO VENICE BEACH.

YOU NEVER MET CARLA, DID YOU?

CARLA AND LINDA WERE INTERCHANGEABLE. BUT CARLA, I KEPT OFF THE BOOKS. HER RECORD IS CLEAN AND THAT MAKES HER IDEAL FOR YOU.

THERE WERE TWO CONNECTORS BEFORE YOU. THE FIRST DISAPPEARED TWO MONTHS AGO. THE SECOND ONE CAME BACK LAST WEEK AS A SHADE.

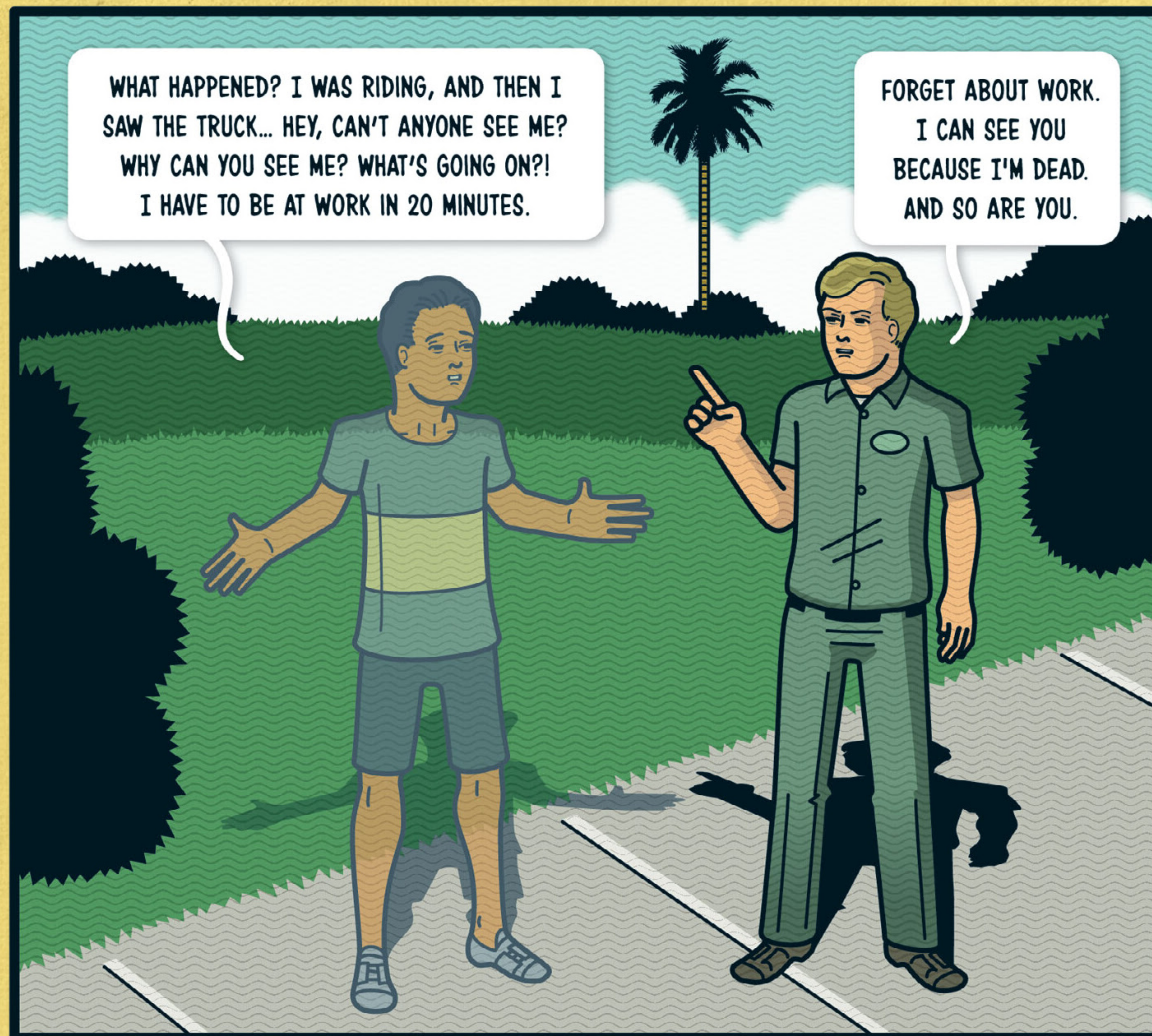
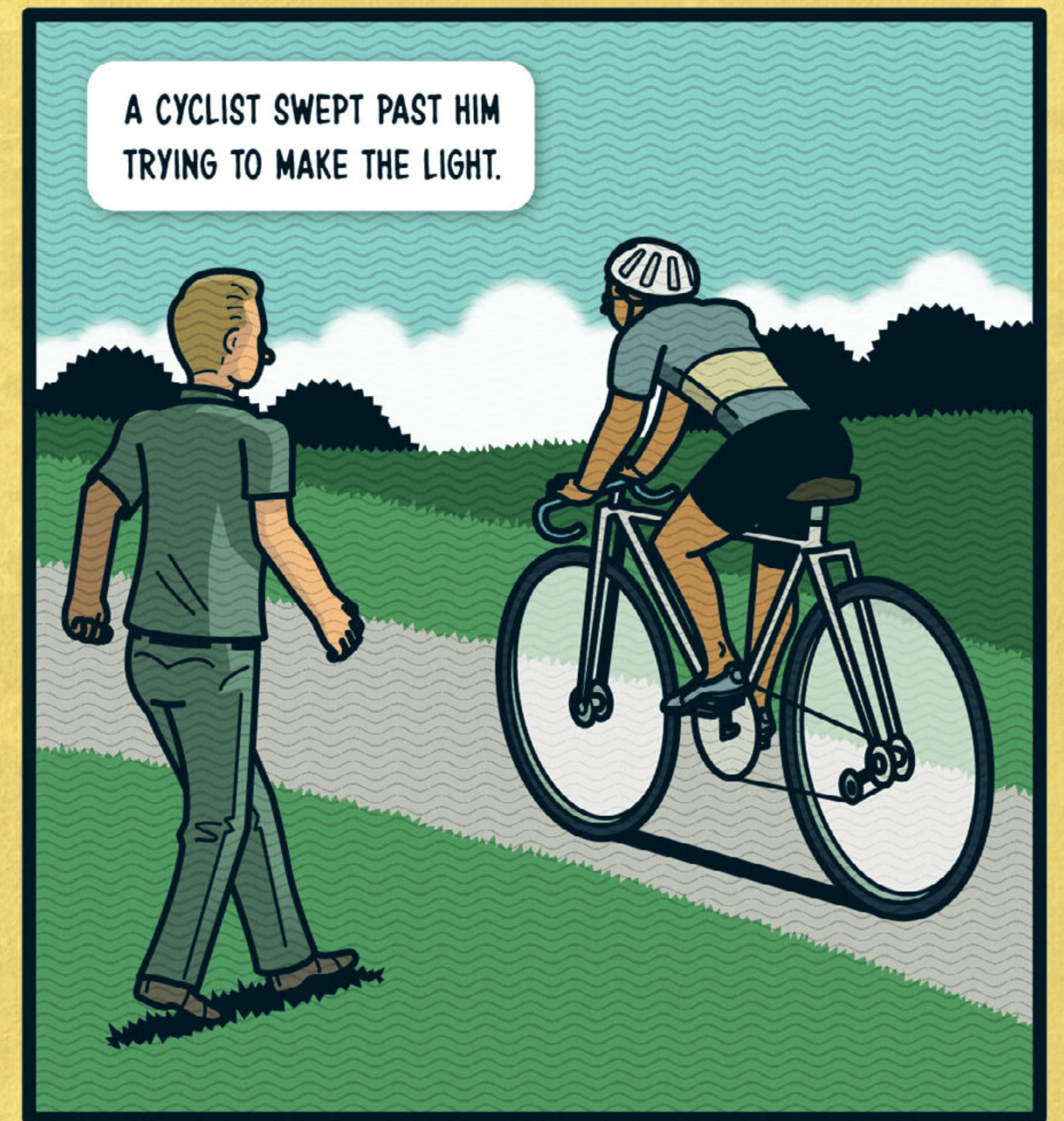
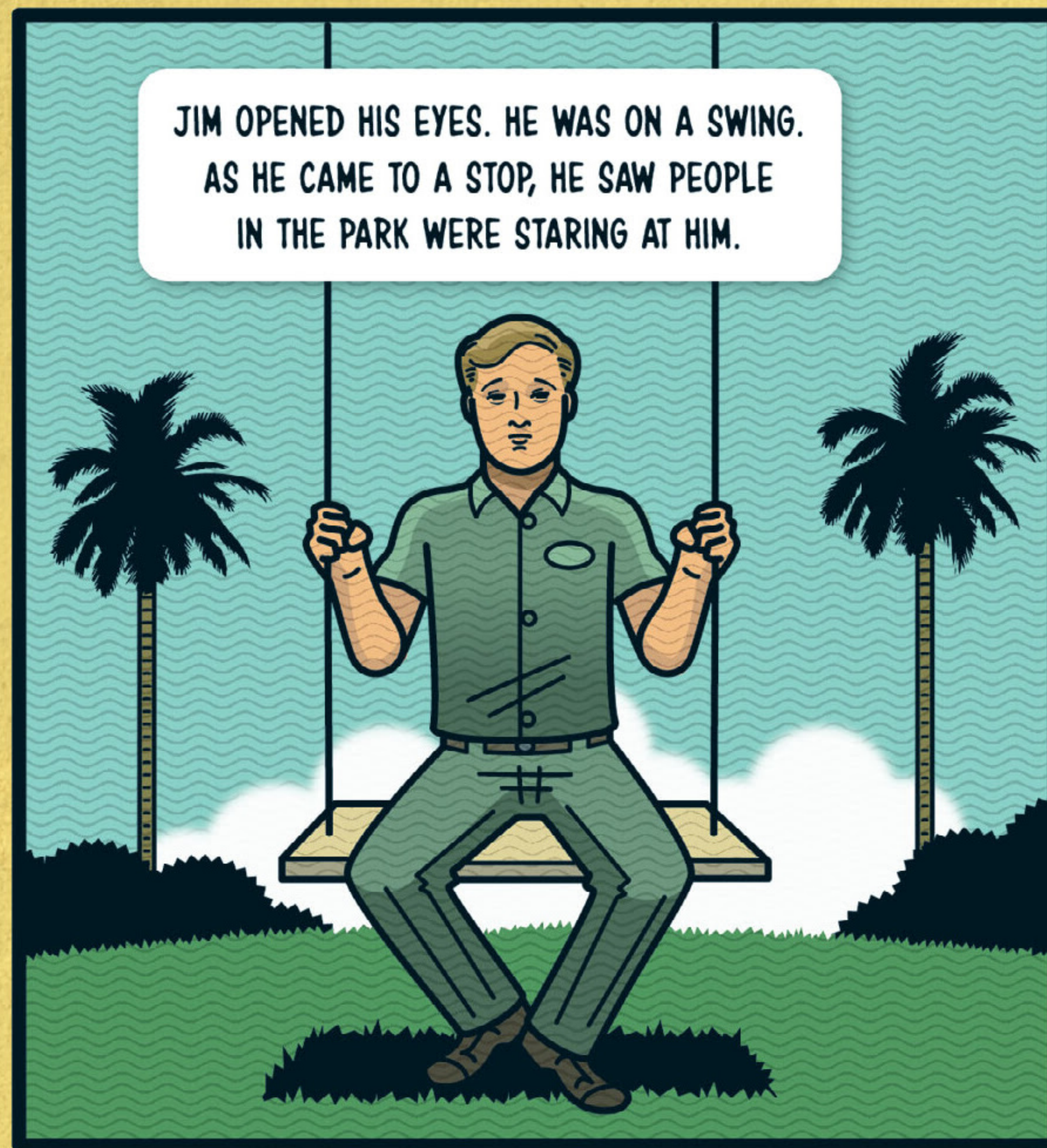
THE DOOR OPENED PARTWAY, AND CARLA LOOKED OUT AT THEM.

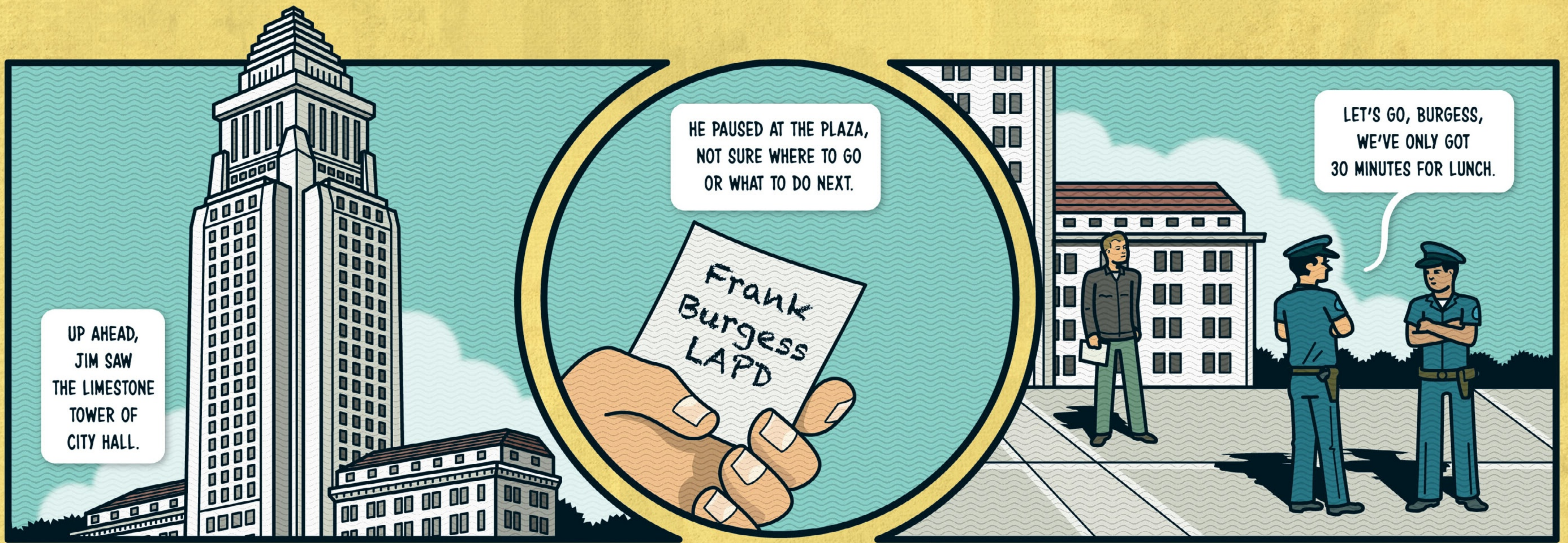
NOW WE KNOW THE FIRST ONE IS STILL THERE, AND ONE OF YOUR JOBS WILL BE TO FIND HER.

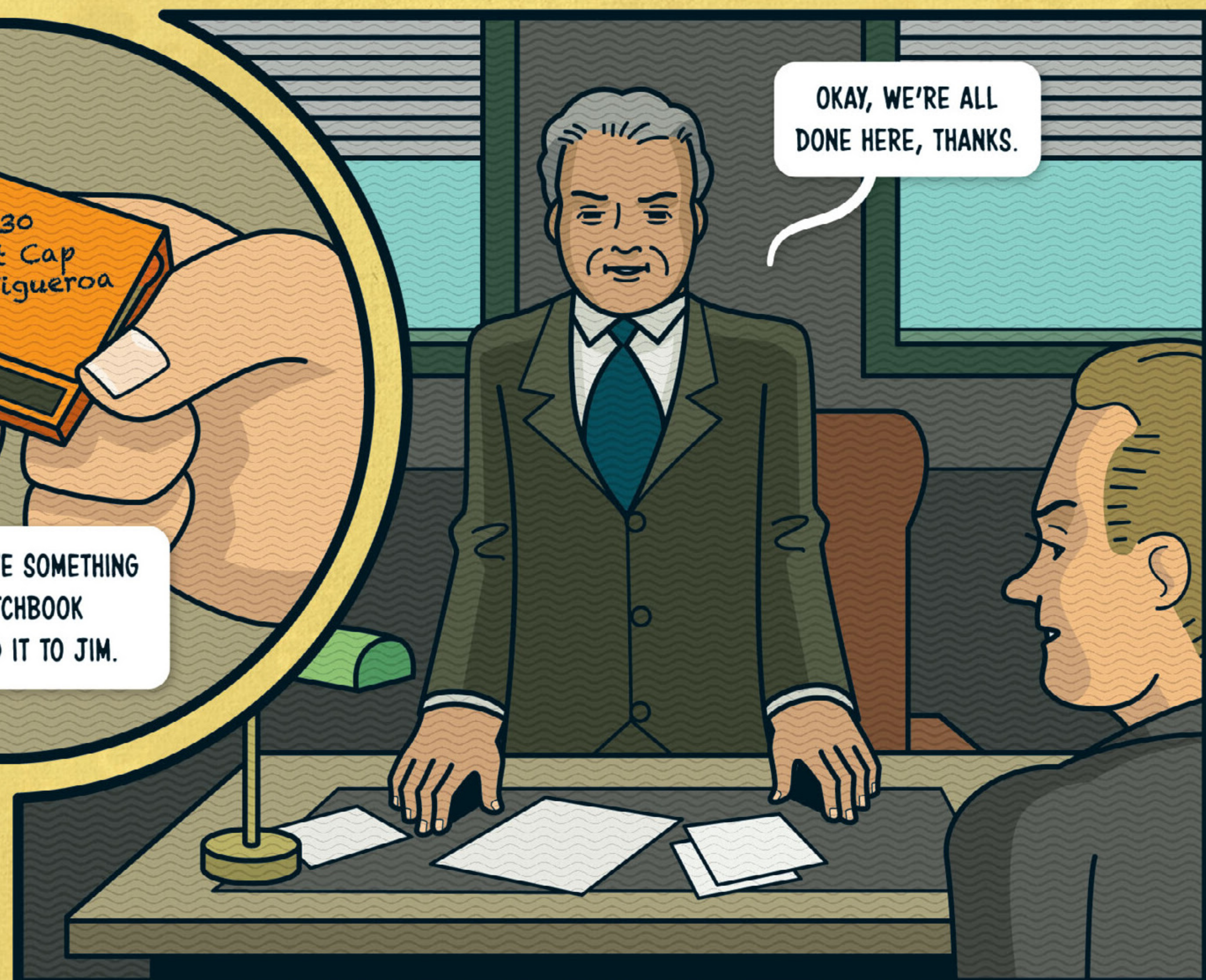
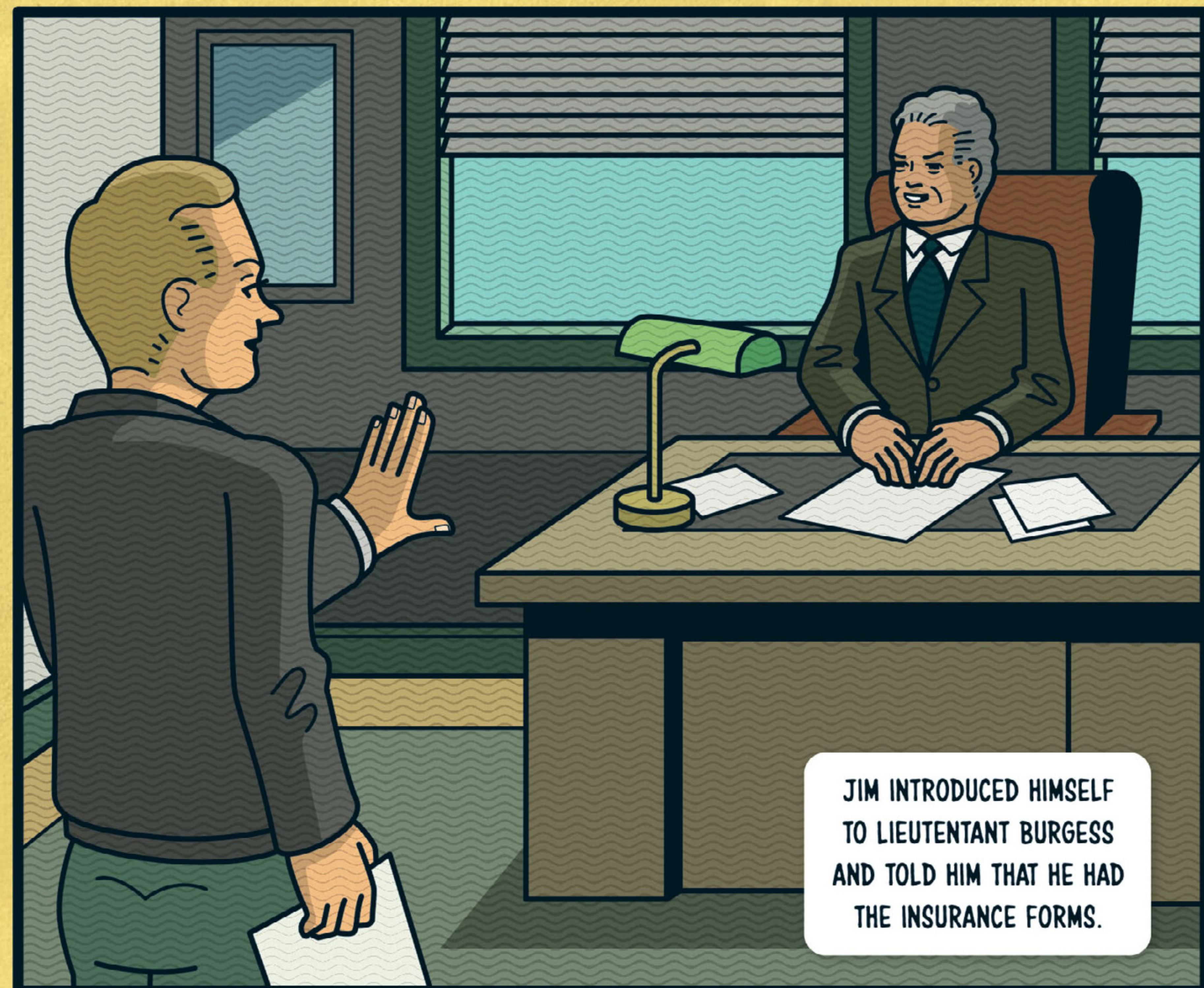
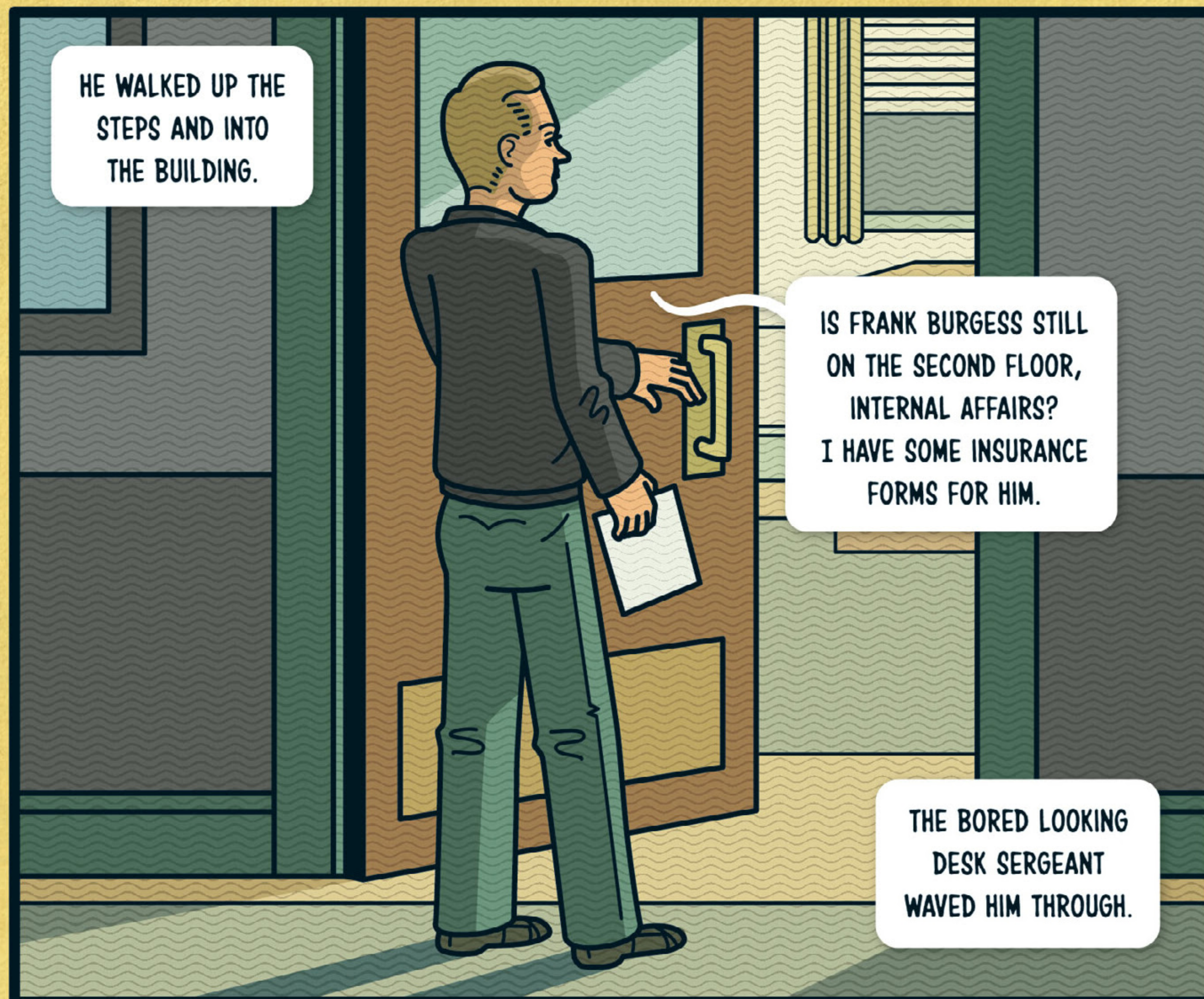
YOU'LL GO UNDER THE RIVER AND LOOK FOR THE DECEASED. IT WILL BE UP TO YOU TO MAKE CONTACT. AND GET BACK IN ONE PIECE.

GET WHAT YOU NEED, AND GET OUT. IT'S DANGEROUS FOR US IF YOU STAY TOO LONG. THEY CAN PICK UP YOUR SIGNAL.

THE CRYSTAL BALL PULSED AND THE ROOM WENT DARK.







5:30. BURGESS
WAS ALREADY
THERE.

WE WERE PARTNERS.
ROBBERY DIVISION.
HE SAVED MY LIFE...
PUSHED ME OUT OF THE
WAY IN A SHOOTOUT.
HE TOOK THE BULLET
INSTEAD OF ME.

HE
ORDERED
DRINKS.

HE HAD 500 COPS AT HIS FUNERAL,
AS WELL AS HIS WIDOW AND THREE KIDS.
WHEN HE GOT BACK IN TOUCH
WITH ME...I AGREED TO HELP.

HE HAD ME SET UP A NONPROFIT, WHICH
WE'D USE AS A FRONT TO SMUGGLE SHADES.
IT'S CALLED C.H.A.R.O.N.--COMMUNITY HEALTH
AND RESOURCES OPPORTUNITY NETWORK.

SOME FINANCIAL COMPANIES
HELPED BANKROLL IT THROUGH
LARGE CHARITABLE DONATIONS.

THE MISSION? COMMUNITY-BASED DEBT COUNSELING.
C.H.A.R.O.N. TAKES FOLKS WHO ARE UP TO THEIR
NECKS IN DEBT AND HELPS STRAIGHTEN THEM OUT,
WHILE ALSO PROVIDING THEM WITH LIFE INSURANCE.
IT'S ALL UNDERWRITTEN BY BANKS, WANTING TO
SHOW WHAT GOOD CORPORATE CITIZENS THEY ARE.

THERE'S OVERSIGHT, BUT IT ONLY LOOKS AT WHERE THE
MONEY GOES... THE PEOPLE? NOBODY CARES ABOUT THEM.
IF THEY DIED, NO ONE WOULD MISS THEM... THAT'S WHAT
MAKES THEM IDEAL VESSELS FOR BRINGING SHADES OVER.

WHEN THESE FOLKS DO DIE AND THEIR SHADE GETS UP
AND LEAVES, ANOTHER SHADE CAN CROSS BACK FROM
THE A.L., UNDETECTED...AS LONG AS IT'S TIMED RIGHT
TO THE MOMENT OF DEATH.

THE INSURANCE PAYOUT PLEASES THE
BENEFICIARIES, SO NOBODY RAISES A STINK.
AND THE SHADE IS HAPPY FOR A VACATION,
SO WE GET PAID IN FULL.



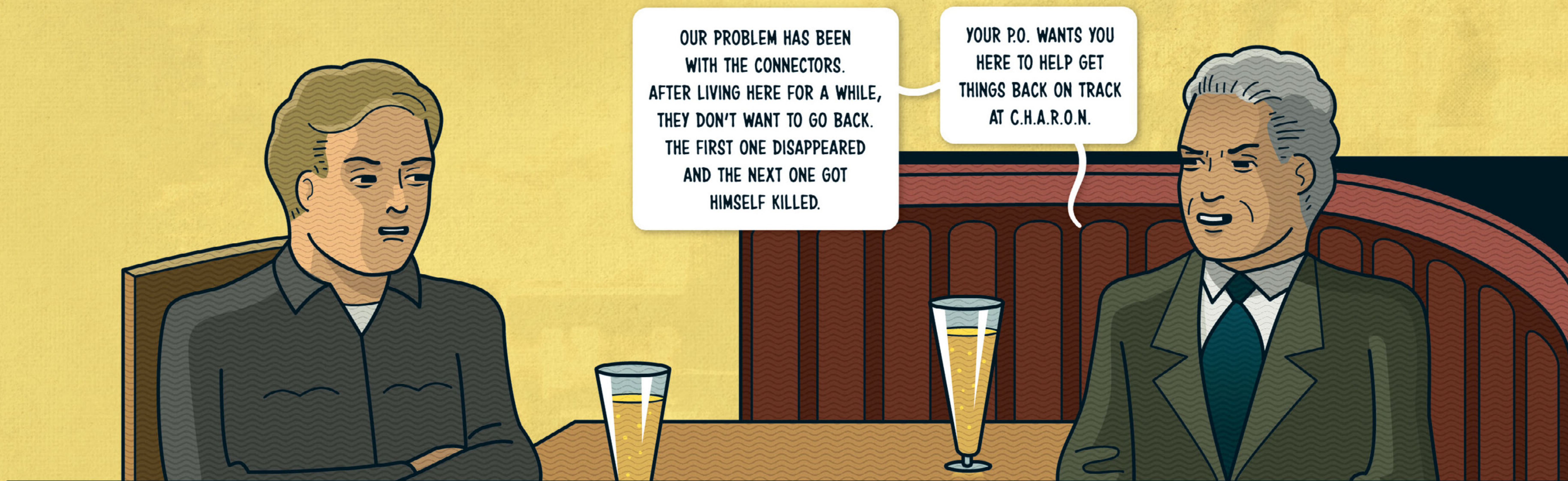
IN ORDER TO KEEP IT OFF THE BOOKS HERE...
WE USE CONNECTORS TO DO ALL THE FINALIZING...



...AT THE MOMENT OF THE CLIENT'S DEATH, THEIR SHADE
DEPARTS TO THE A.L. THE CONNECTOR THEN GUIDES
A SHADE FROM THE A.L. BACK TO THE LIVING WORLD.
UNDER THE RIVER, SO TO SPEAK...

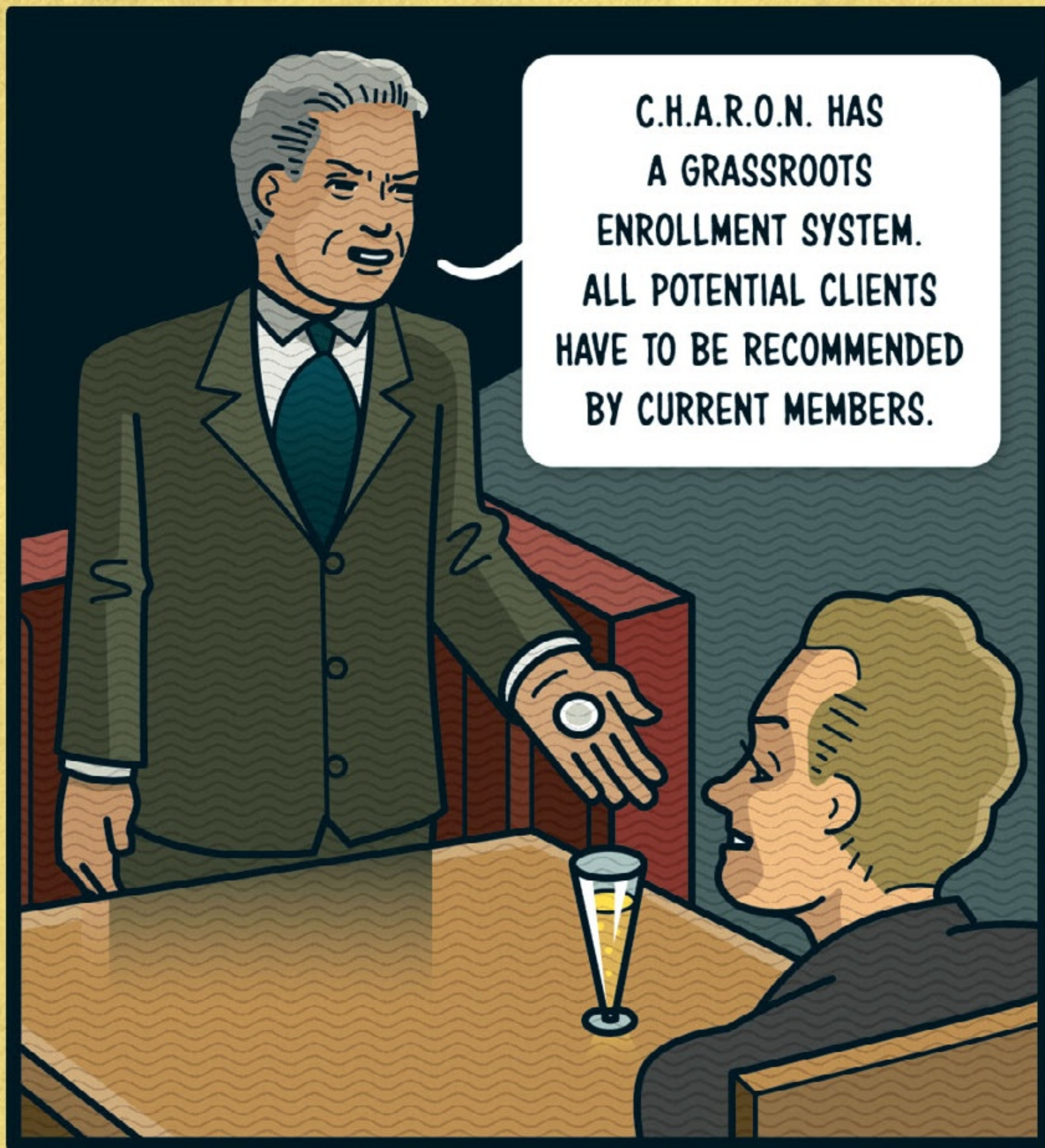


...WHEN OUR NEWLY DECEASED
ARRIVES IN THE A.L. THEY
HAVE NO MEMORY OF WHAT
JUST HAPPENED TO THEM.
IT ALL WORKS OUT FINE.

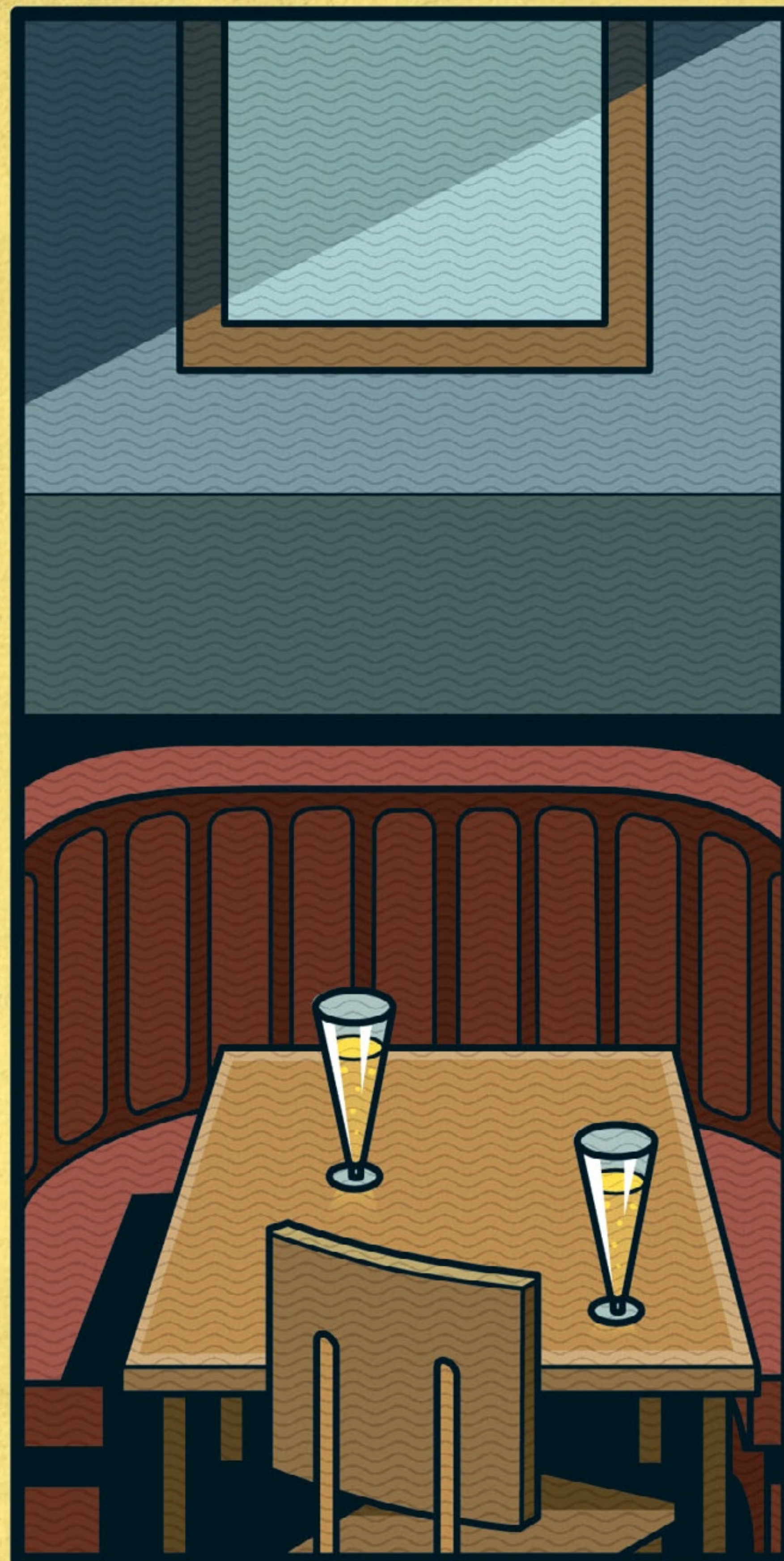


OUR PROBLEM HAS BEEN
WITH THE CONNECTORS.
AFTER LIVING HERE FOR A WHILE,
THEY DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.
THE FIRST ONE DISAPPEARED
AND THE NEXT ONE GOT
HIMSELF KILLED.

YOUR P.O. WANTS YOU
HERE TO HELP GET
THINGS BACK ON TRACK
AT C.H.A.R.O.N.



AS HE GOT UP TO LEAVE, BURGESS TOOK OUT A SILVER COIN AND GAVE IT TO JIM.



CHAPTER 13

BY THE TIME THEY
LEFT CARLA'S
BUNGALOW, IT WAS
DARK. JIM SHOWED
HIM THE SILVER COIN.

IN ORDER TO ENROLL IN
C.H.A.R.O.N. YOU'LL NEED
THE IDENTITY OF SOMEONE
WHO IS RECENTLY DECEASED
AND IS ROUGHLY YOUR AGE,
WITH NO SURVIVORS AND
LOTS OF DEBT.

IT'S NOT
HEALTHY,
MISTER.

HE WALKED HOME AFTER WORK
AND WAS STOPPED BY THE POLICE.

WHY ARE YOU
OUT SO LATE?

THE FOLLOWING EVENING THE P.O.
WAS WAITING FOR HIM. HE
GOT IN, AND THEY DROVE OFF.

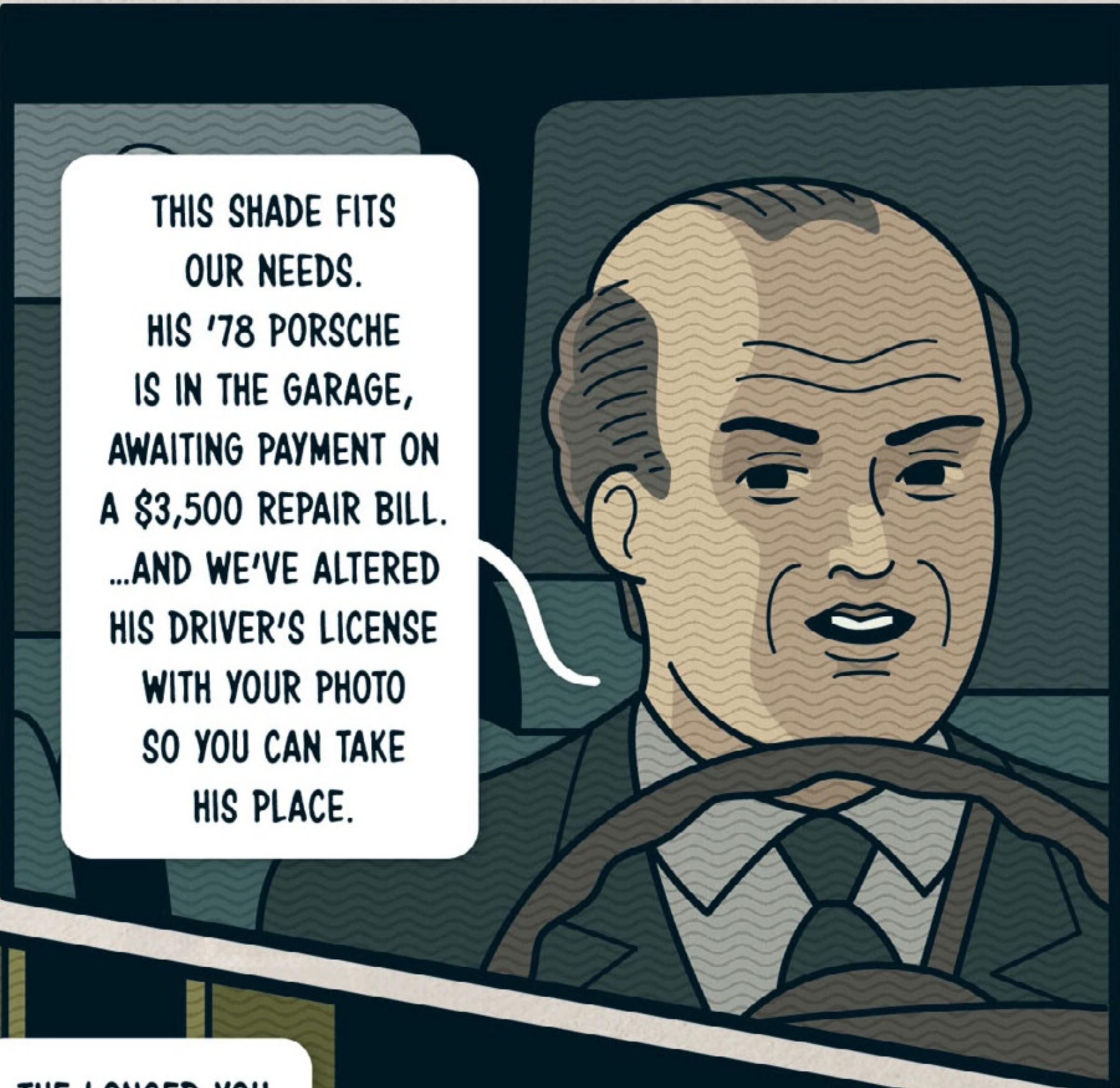
YOU'LL STAY LONGER
THIS TIME, 48 HOURS.

HE HEADED TO A BAR AND
SAT WITH HIS EMPTY GLASS AND
THOUGHT ABOUT HOW STRANGE
IT HAD FELT BEING BACK THERE.

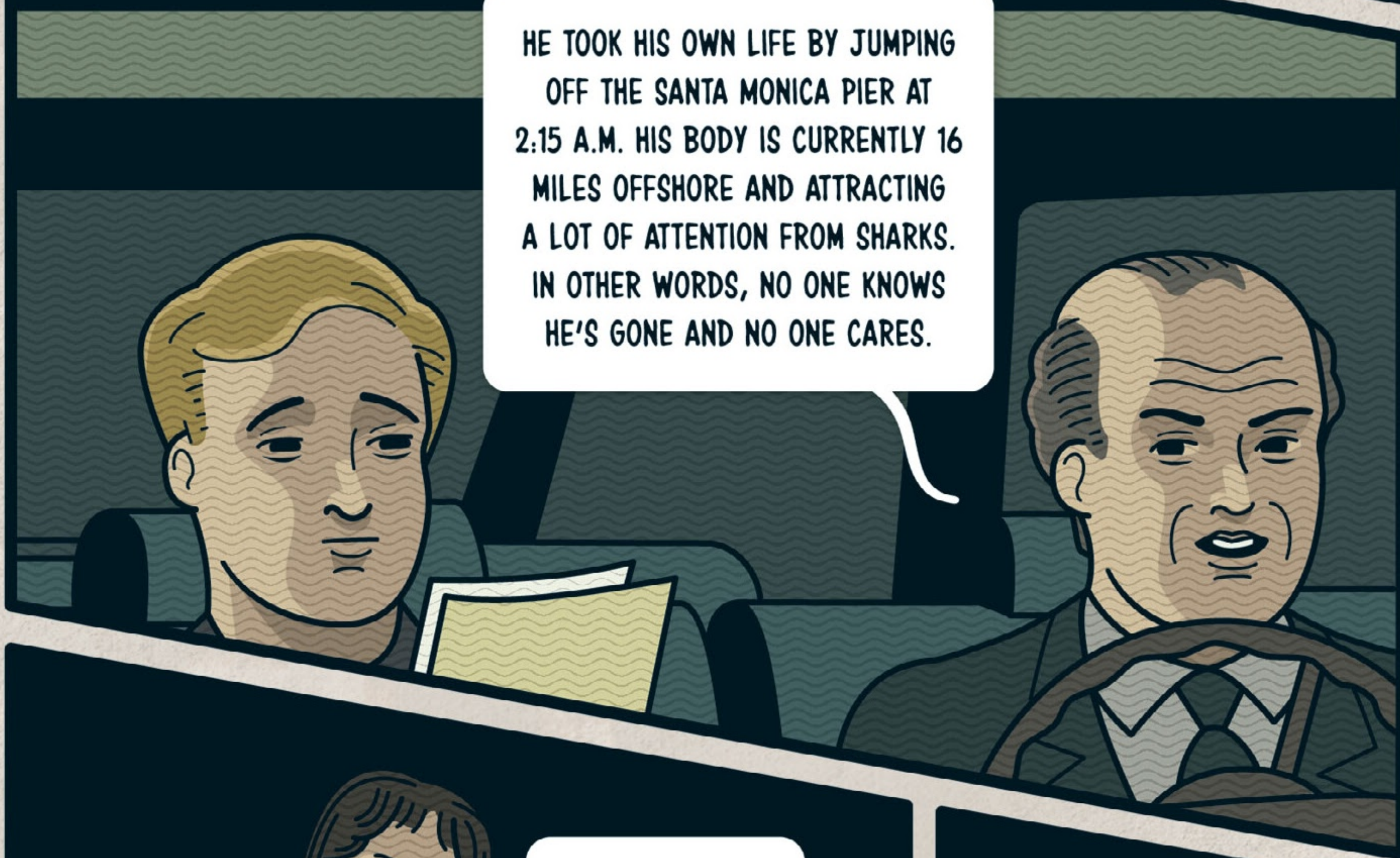
HIS P.O. SLID A MANILA ENVELOPE ACROSS THE SEAT.
"ROGER JARVIS, AGE 32, UNEMPLOYED MARKETING
EXECUTIVE, LIVED IN AN APARTMENT IN NORTH HOLLYWOOD.
HE DIED LAST NIGHT WITH \$23K IN CREDIT CARD DEBT
AND TWO MONTHS PAST DUE ON HIS RENT."



THIS SHADE FITS
OUR NEEDS.
HIS '78 PORSCHE
IS IN THE GARAGE,
AWAITING PAYMENT ON
A \$3,500 REPAIR BILL.
...AND WE'VE ALTERED
HIS DRIVER'S LICENSE
WITH YOUR PHOTO
SO YOU CAN TAKE
HIS PLACE.



HE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE BY JUMPING
OFF THE SANTA MONICA PIER AT
2:15 A.M. HIS BODY IS CURRENTLY 16
MILES OFFSHORE AND ATTRACTING
A LOT OF ATTENTION FROM SHARKS.
IN OTHER WORDS, NO ONE KNOWS
HE'S GONE AND NO ONE CARES.

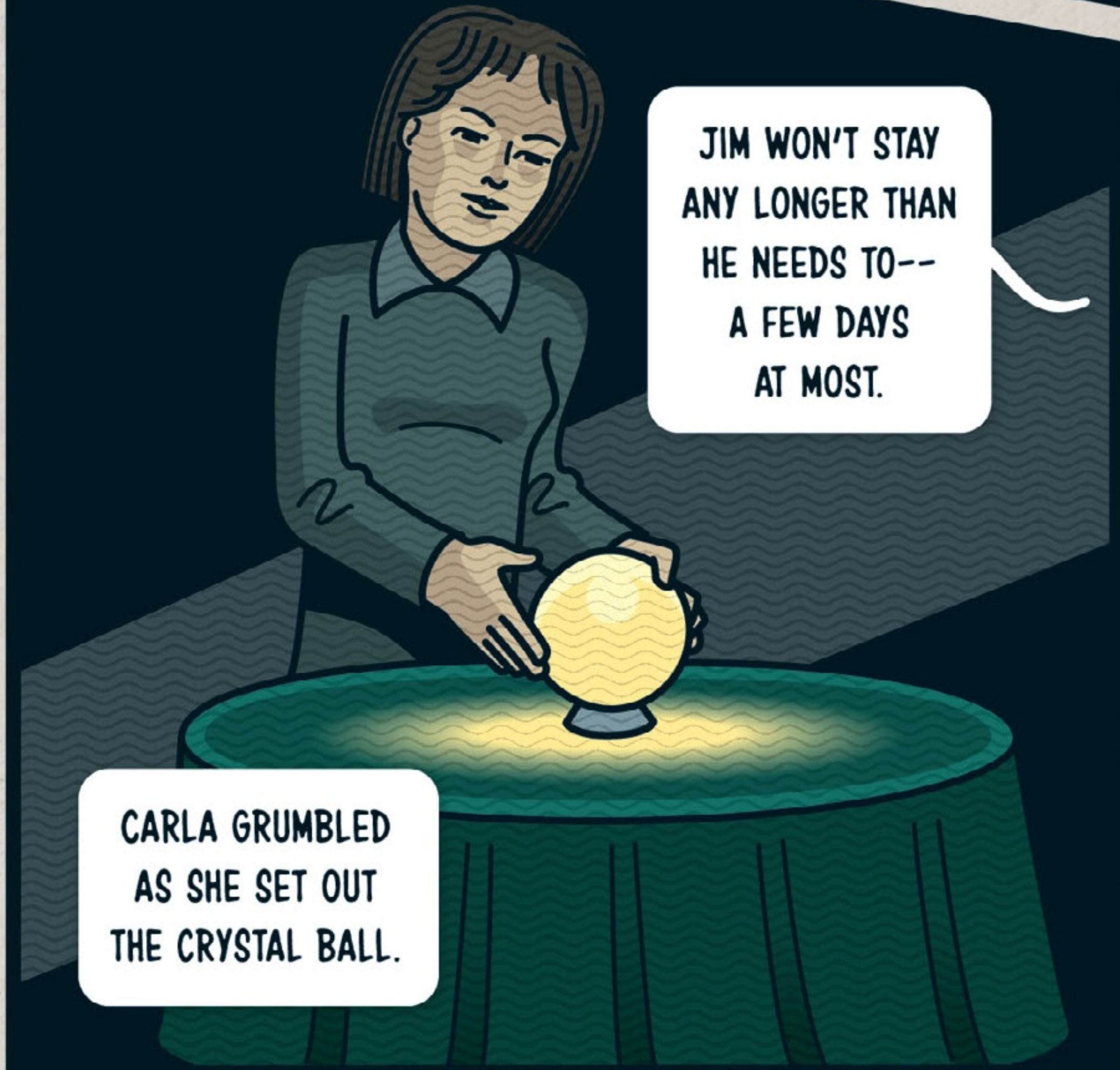


THE LONGER YOU
STAY, THE MORE
DANGEROUS IT IS.
...FOR ALL OF US.



JIM WON'T STAY
ANY LONGER THAN
HE NEEDS TO---
A FEW DAYS
AT MOST.

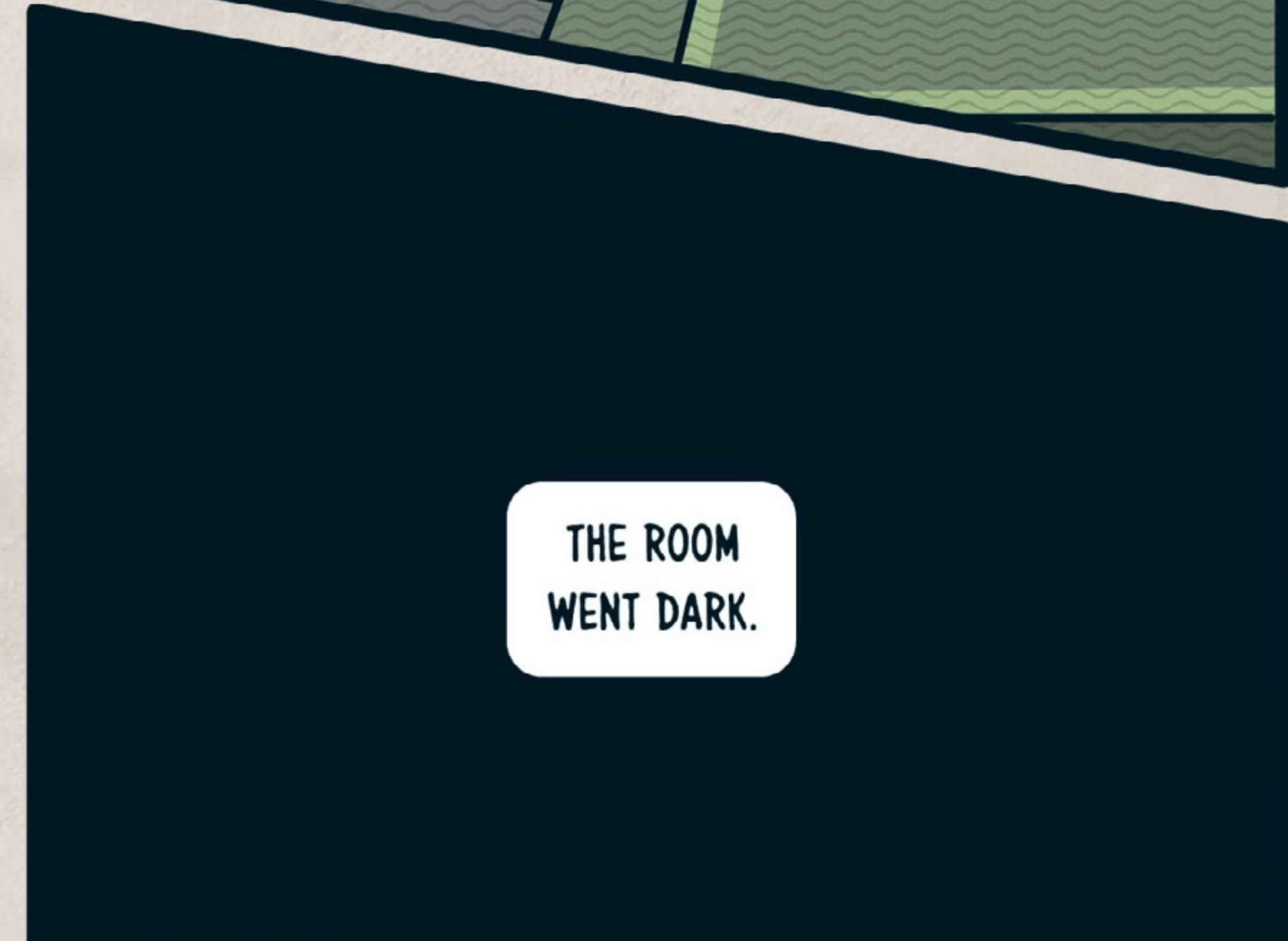
CARLA GRUMBLED
AS SHE SET OUT
THE CRYSTAL BALL.

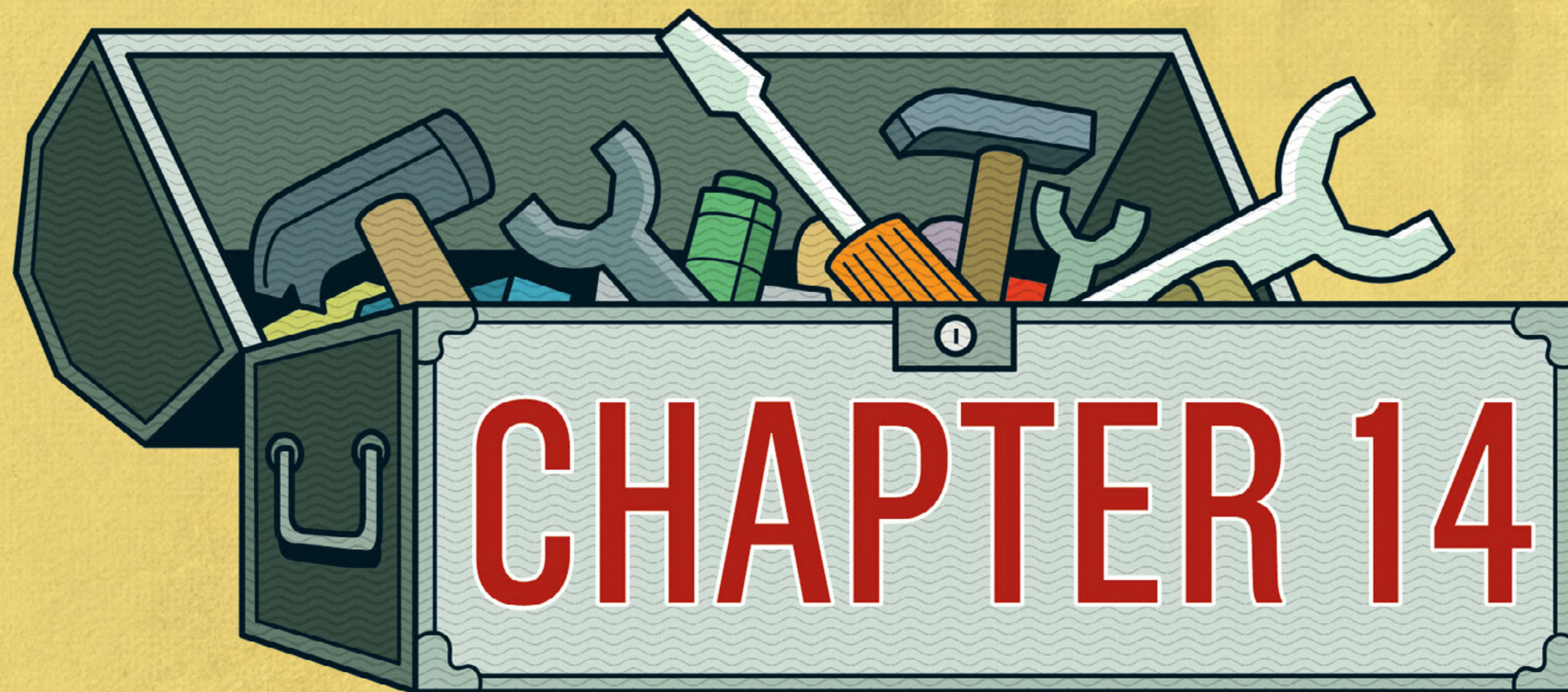


SHE
BEGAN HER
INCANTATION.



THE ROOM
WENT DARK.



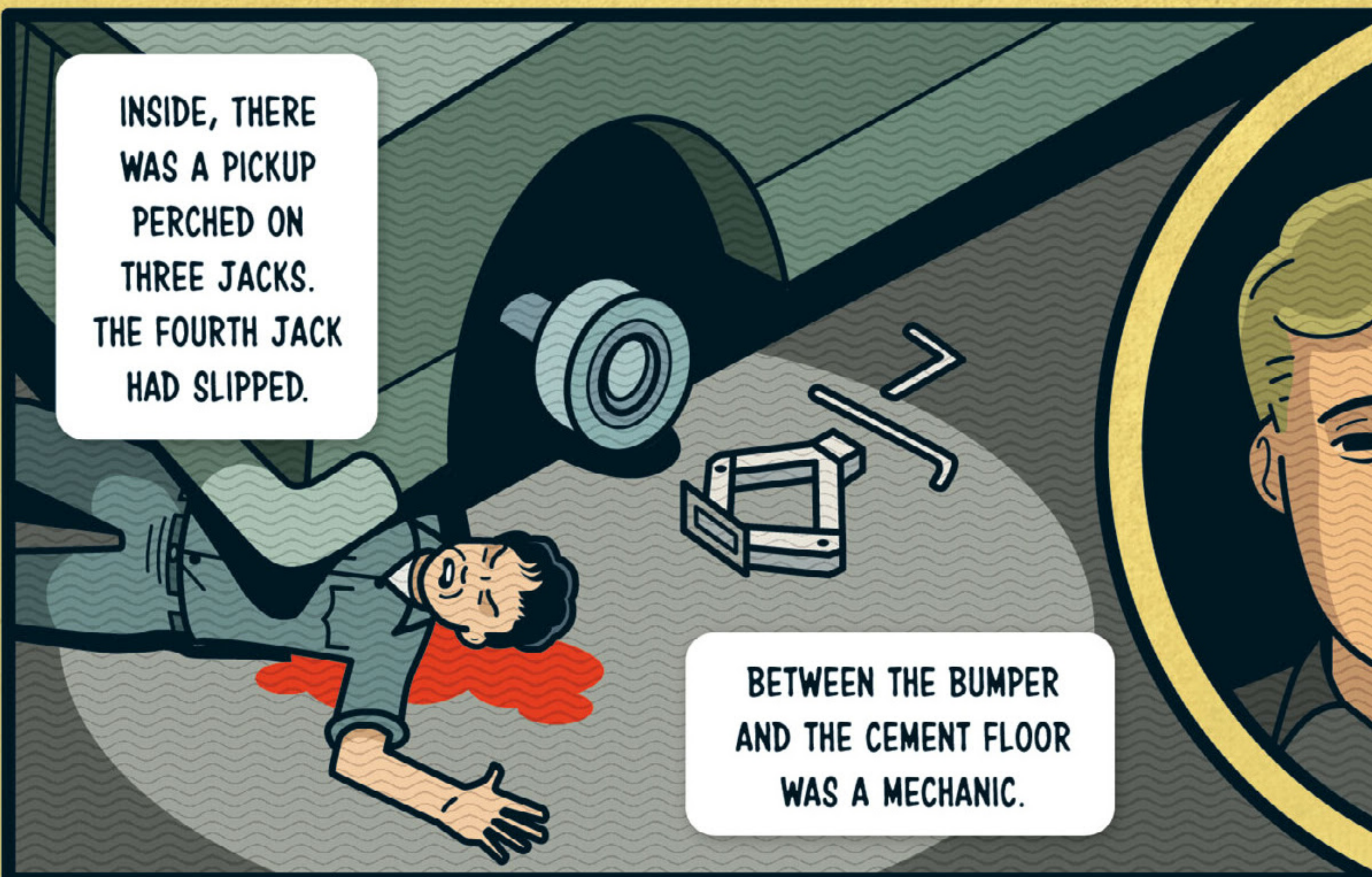


CHAPTER 14

JIM OPENED HIS EYES.
IT WAS STILL DARK, BUT
NOW HE FELT THE NIGHT AIR.
HE LOOKED AROUND AND
SAW HE WAS ON A ROOF
OF A REPAIR SHOP.



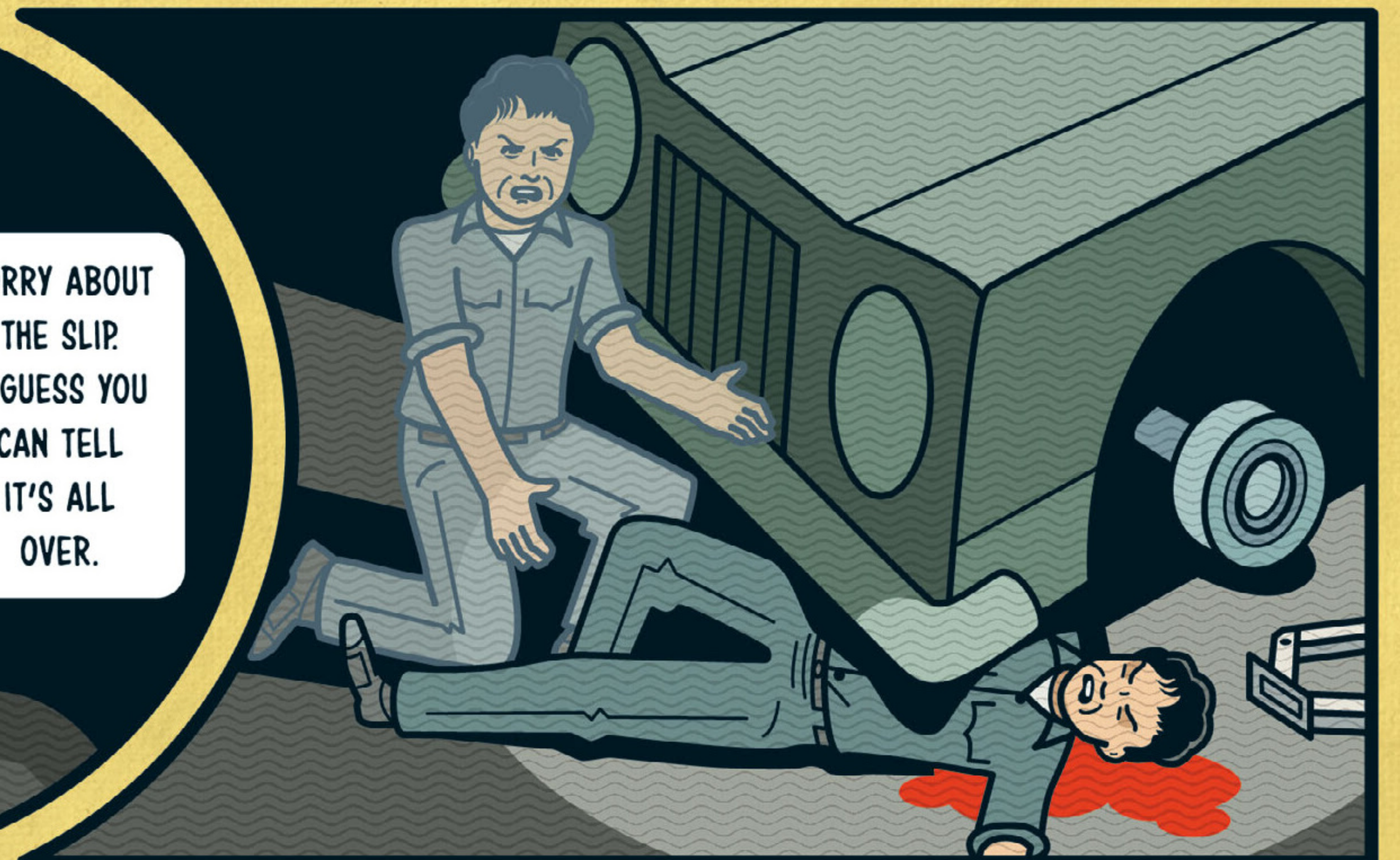
INSIDE, THERE
WAS A PICKUP
PERCHED ON
THREE JACKS.
THE FOURTH JACK
HAD SLIPPED.



BETWEEN THE BUMPER
AND THE CEMENT FLOOR
WAS A MECHANIC.



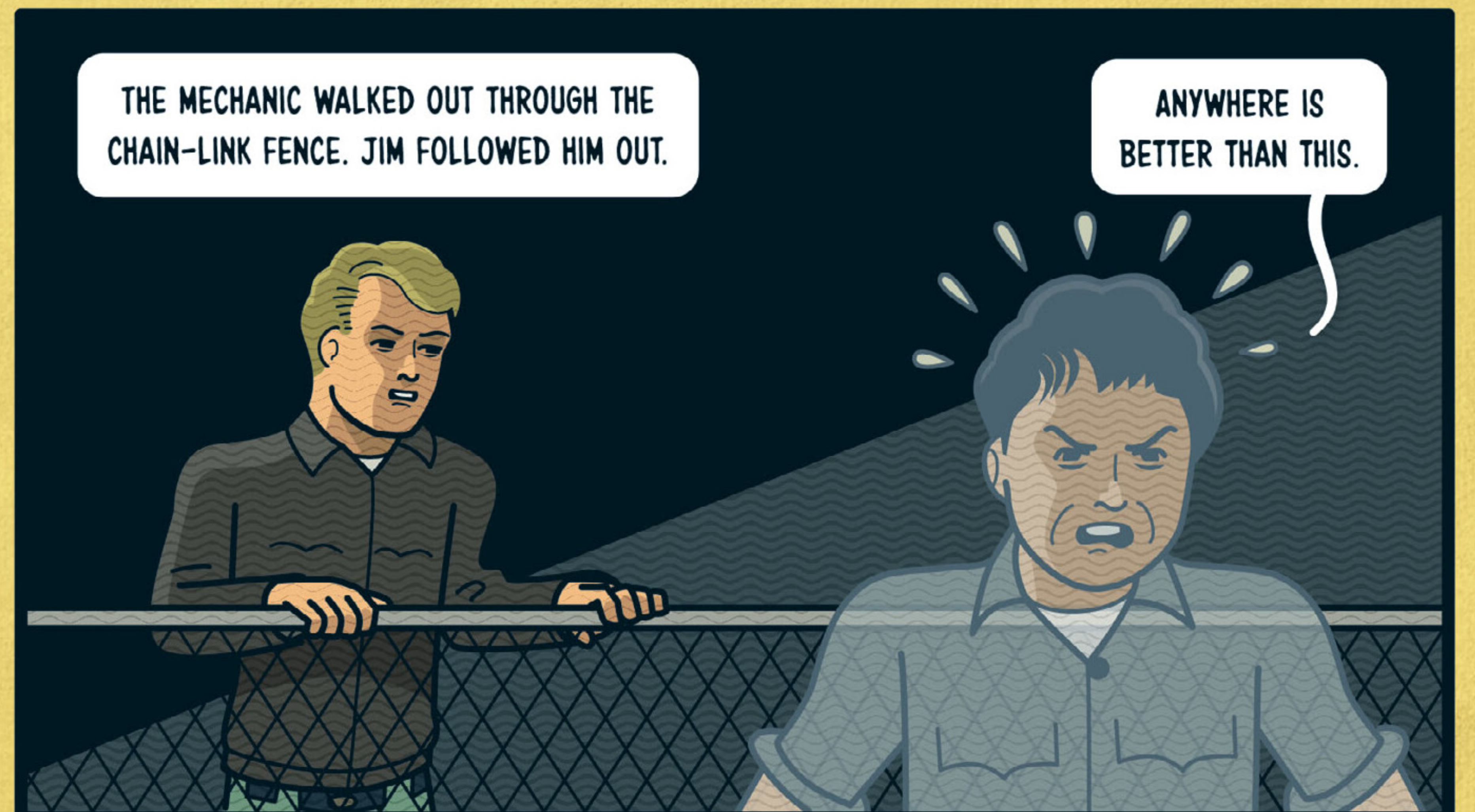
SORRY ABOUT
THE SLIP.
I GUESS YOU
CAN TELL
IT'S ALL
OVER.



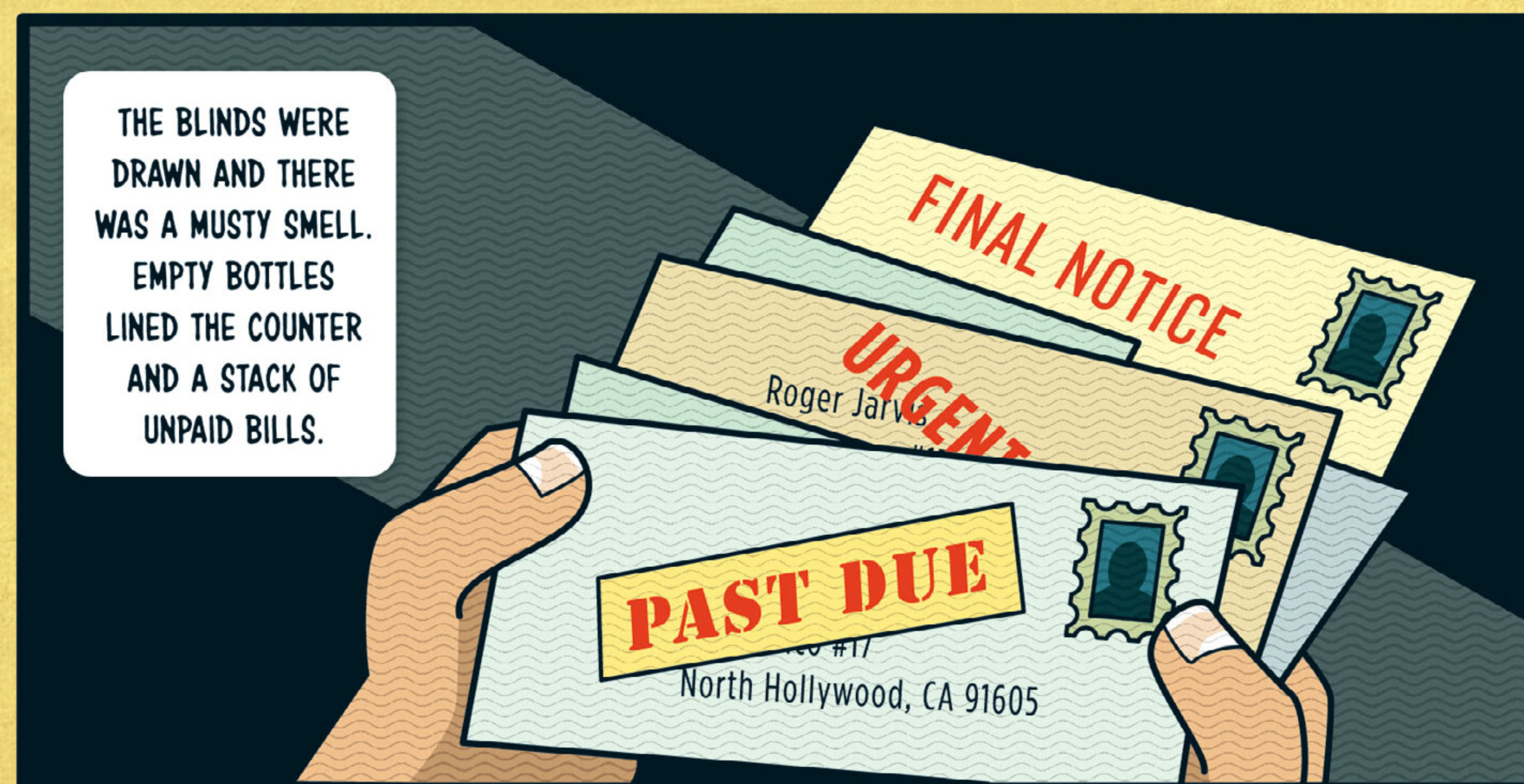
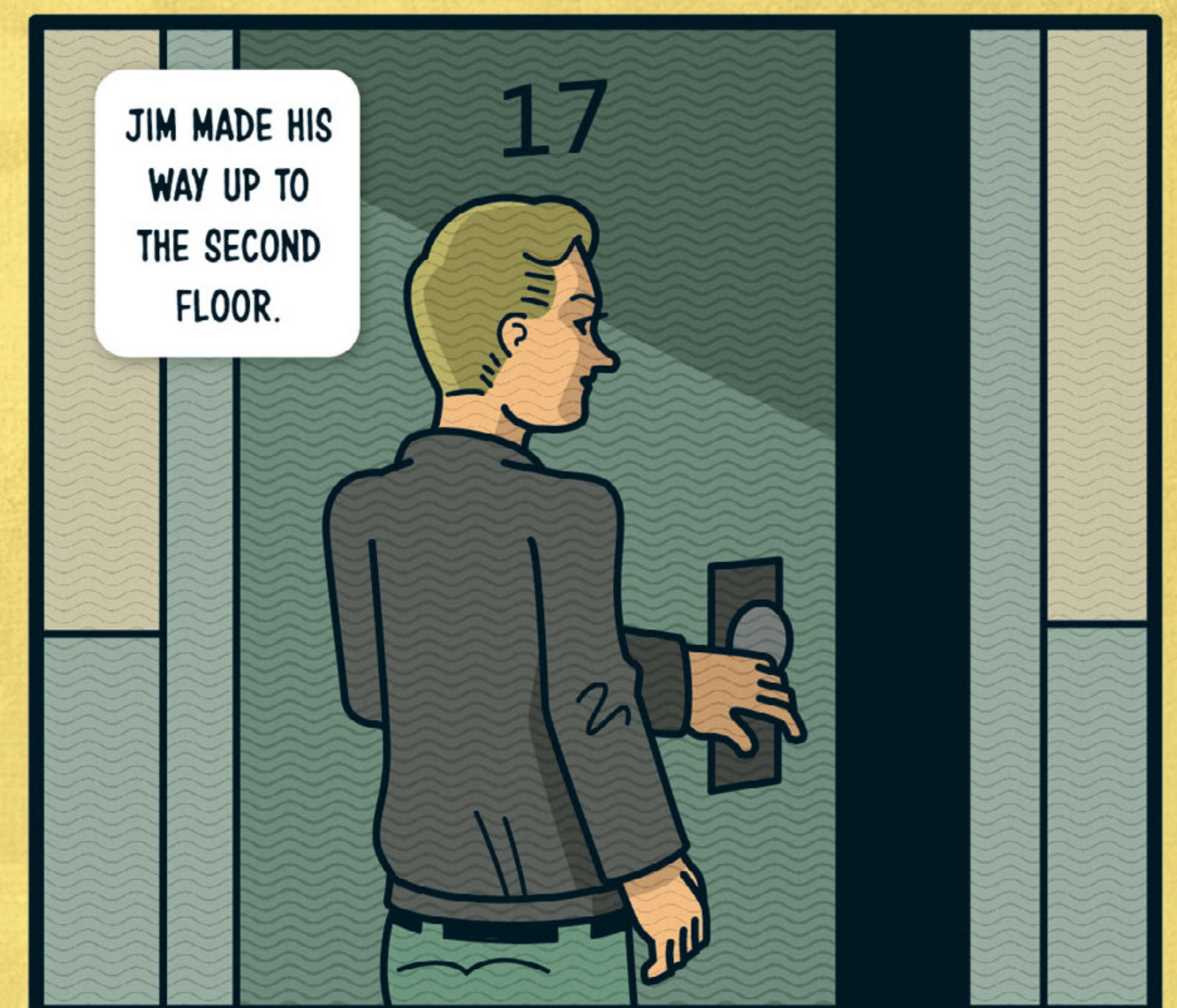
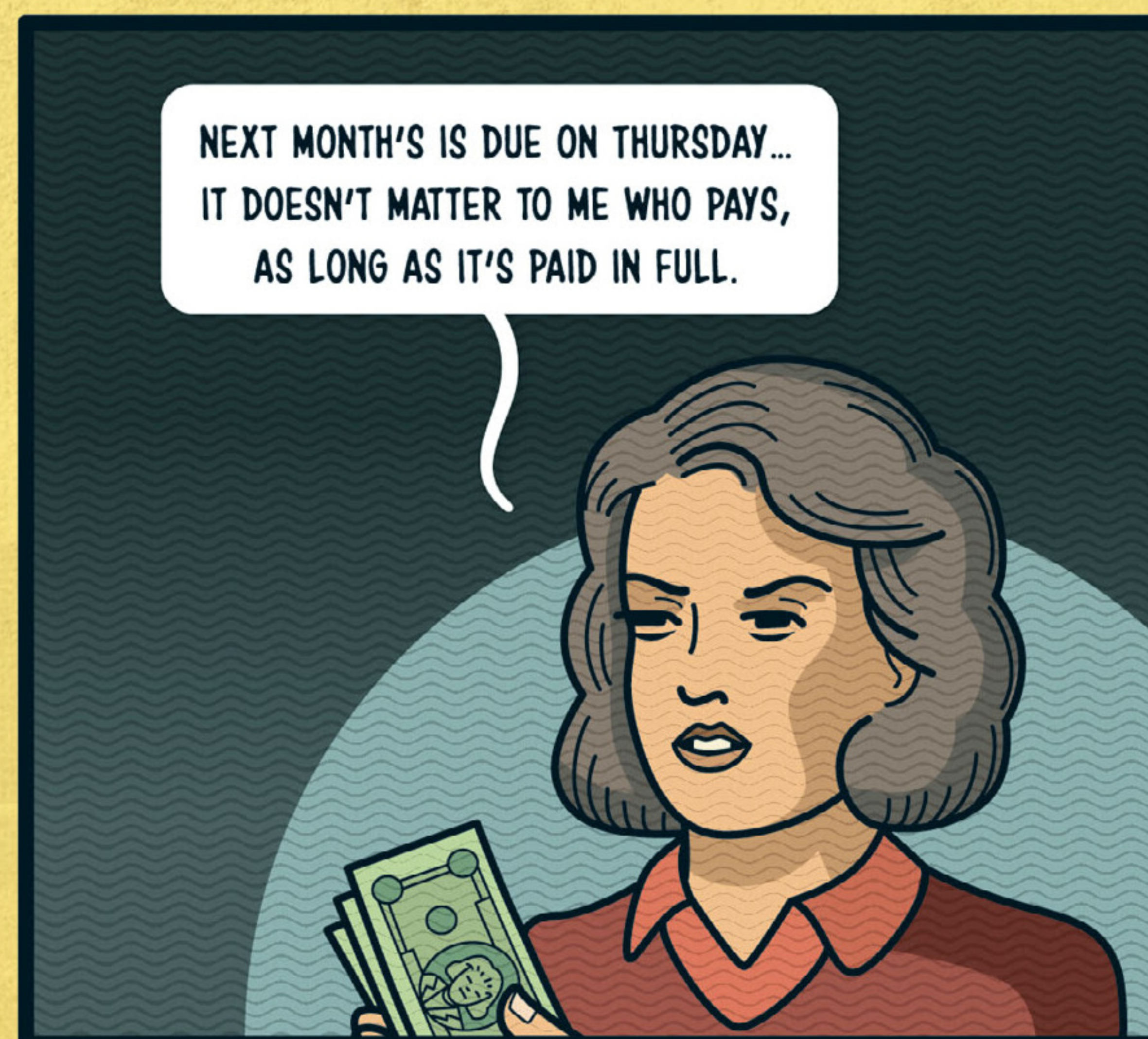
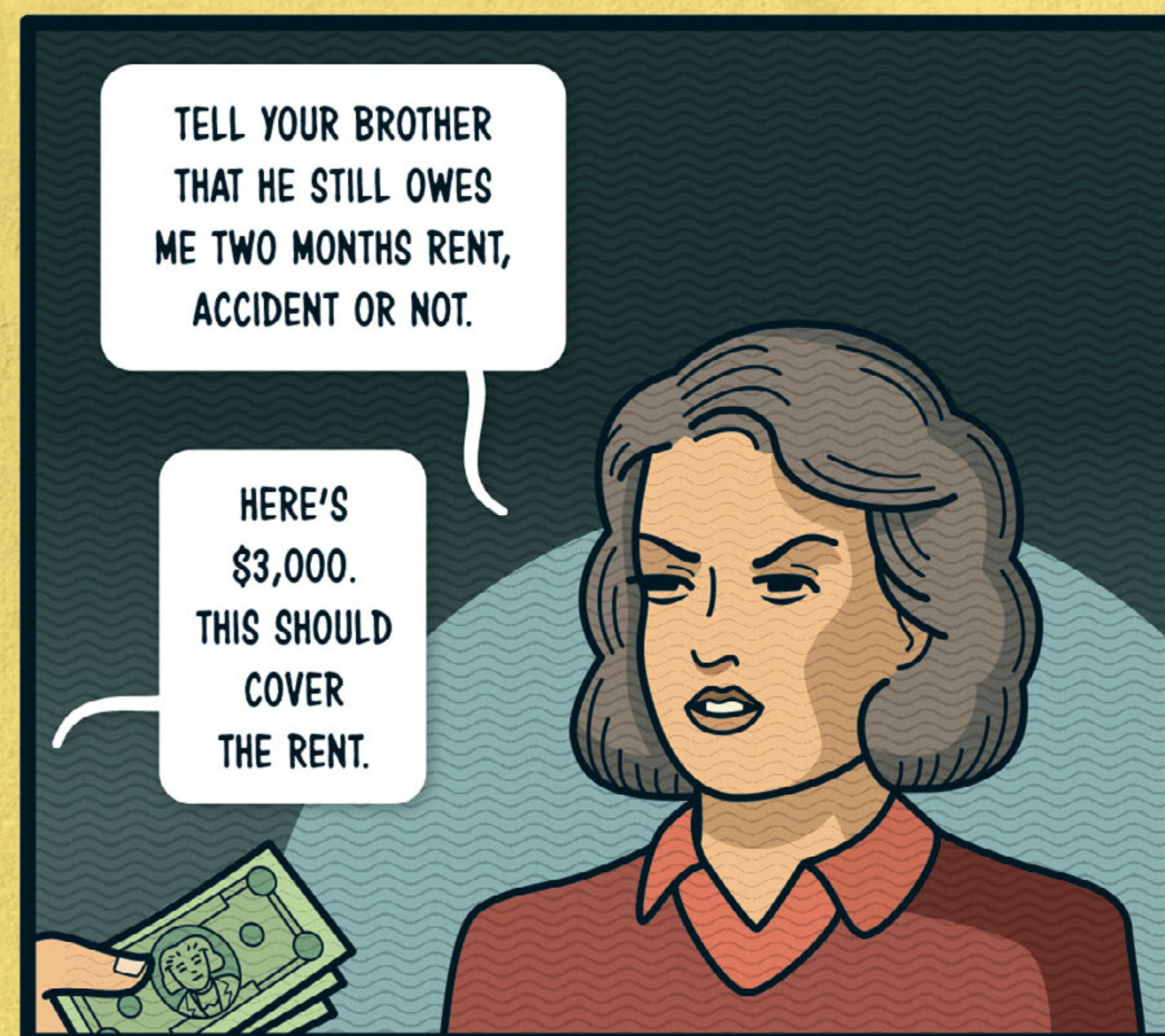
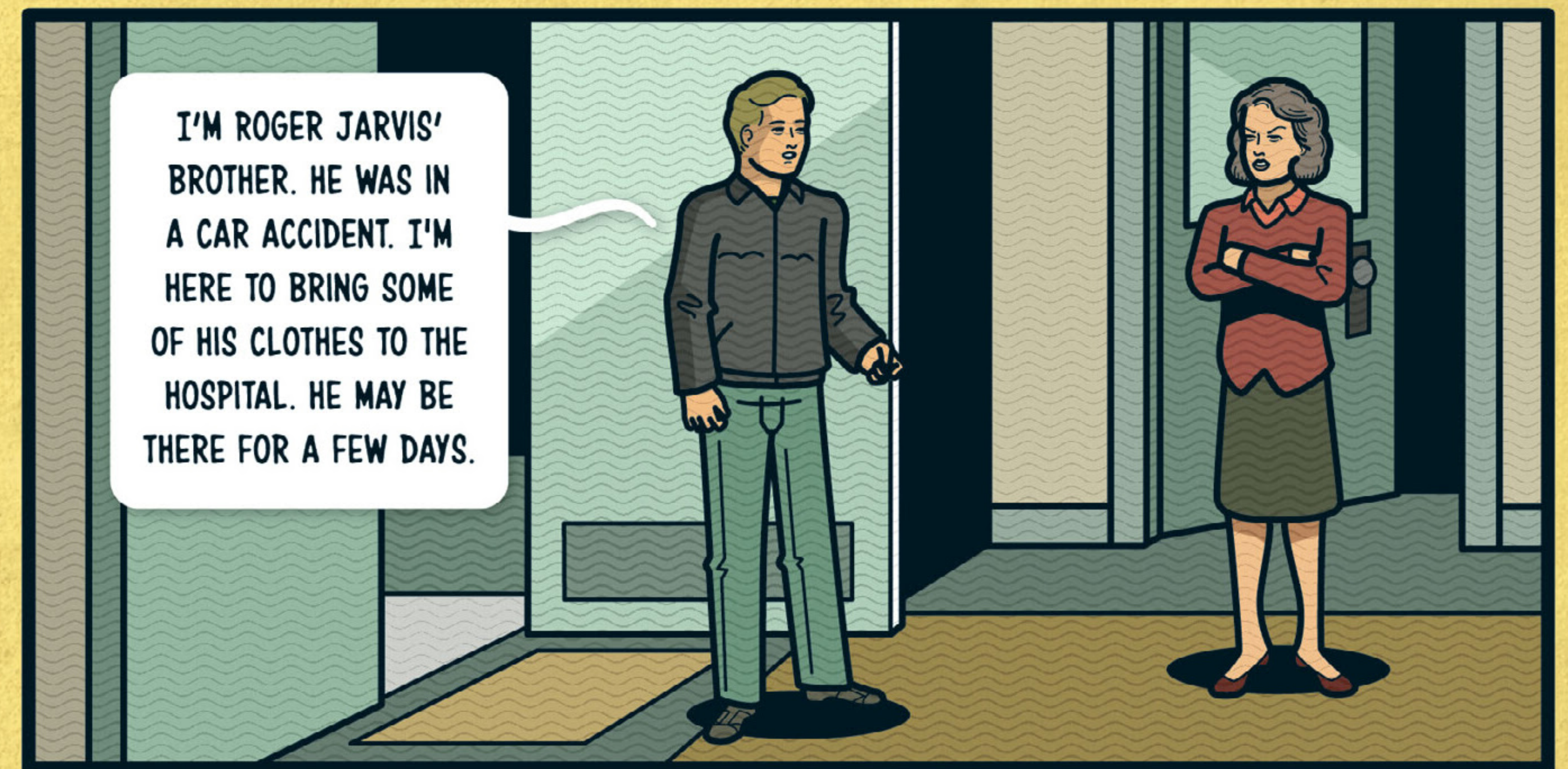
MAN, IT'S BEEN OVER
MY WHOLE DAMN LIFE.



THE MECHANIC WALKED OUT THROUGH THE
CHAIN-LINK FENCE. JIM FOLLOWED HIM OUT.

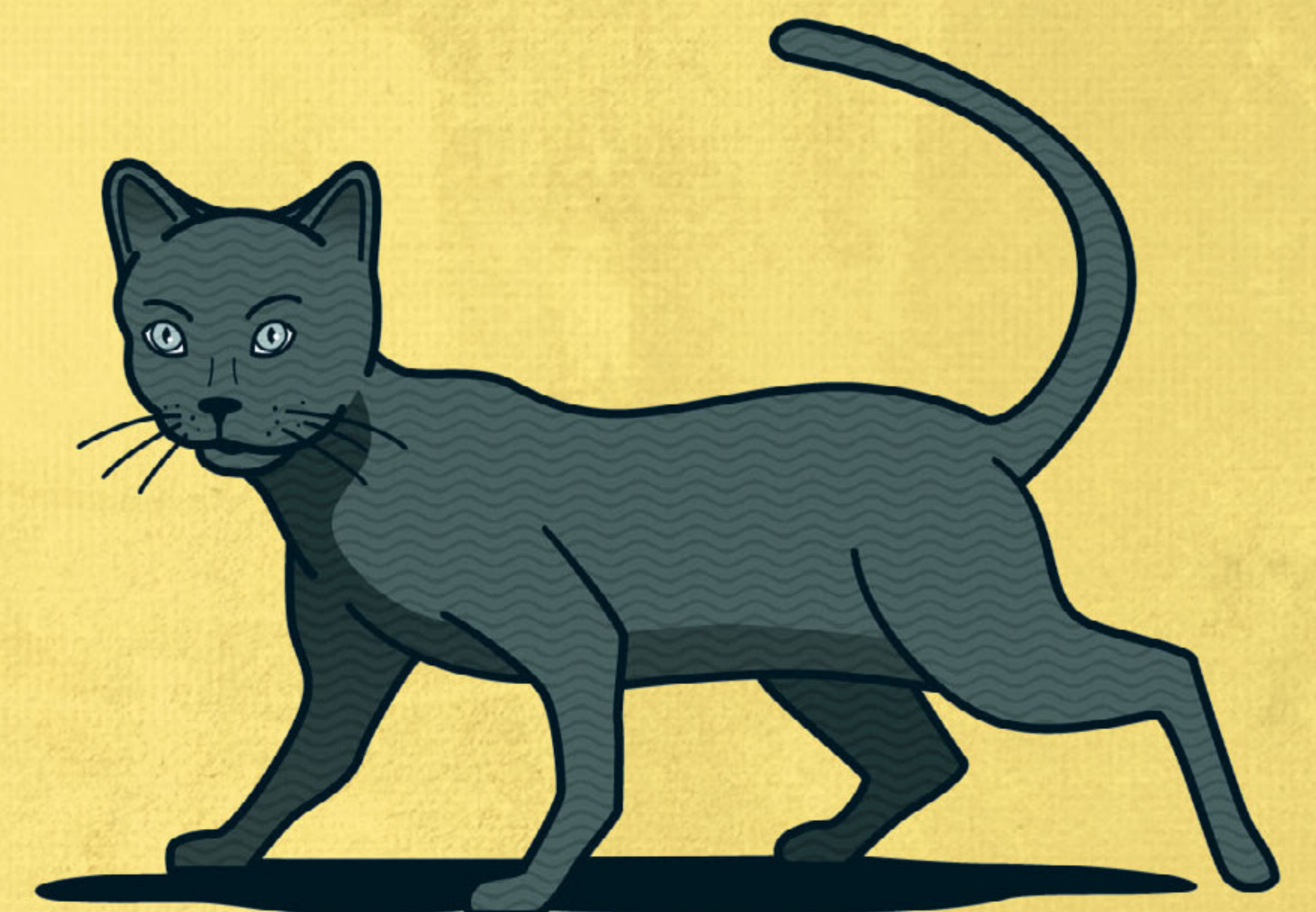


ANYWHERE IS
BETTER THAN THIS.



A CAT SLINKED UP AGAINST HIS LEG AND MEOWED.

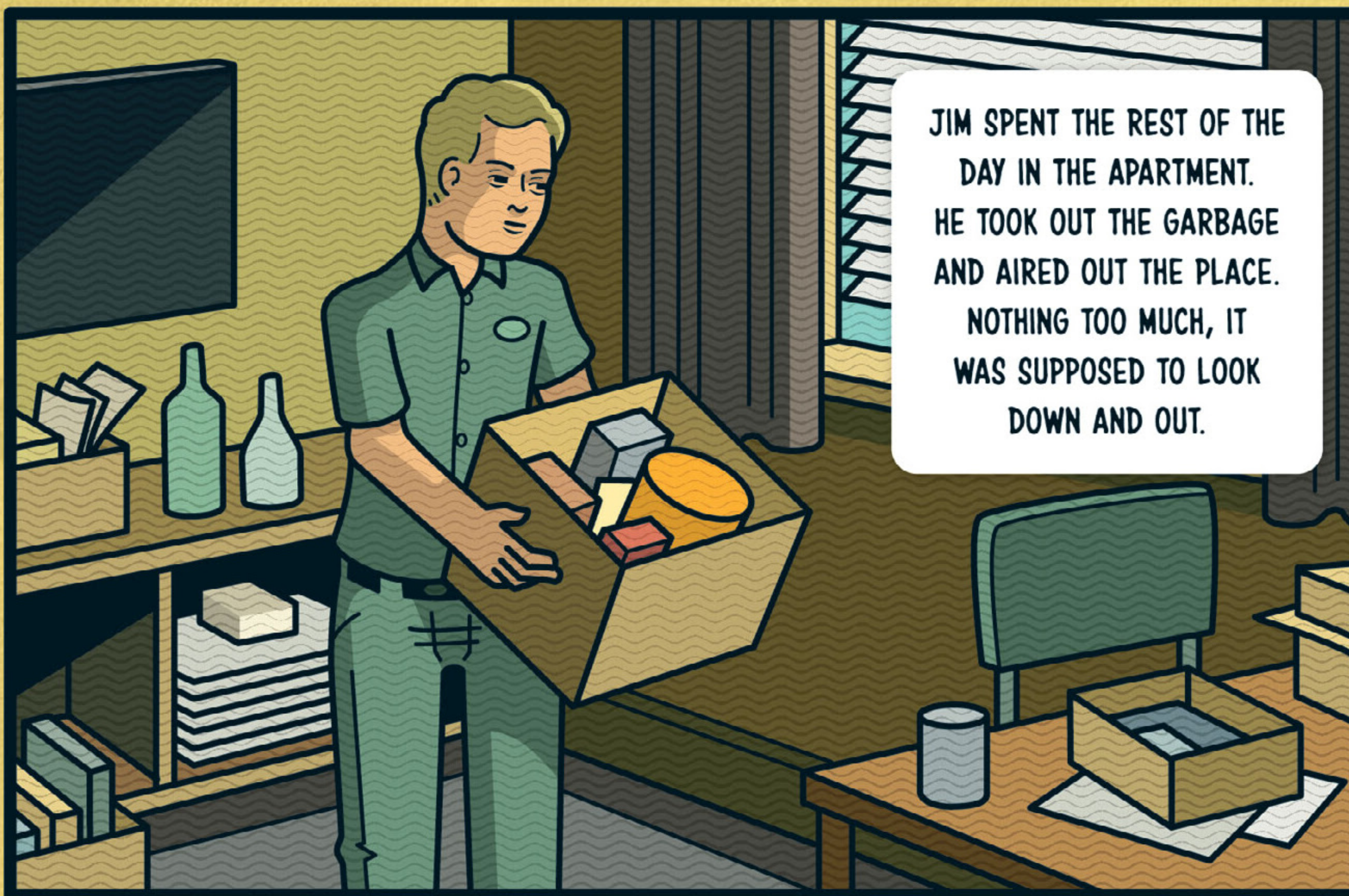
JIM FOUND A STASH OF CAT FOOD AND OPENED A CAN. SHE DEVoured HER MEAL.



HE TOOK OUT THE COIN THAT BURGESS
HAD GIVEN HIM. HE TURNED IT
AND LET THE LIGHT CATCH ITS EDGE.



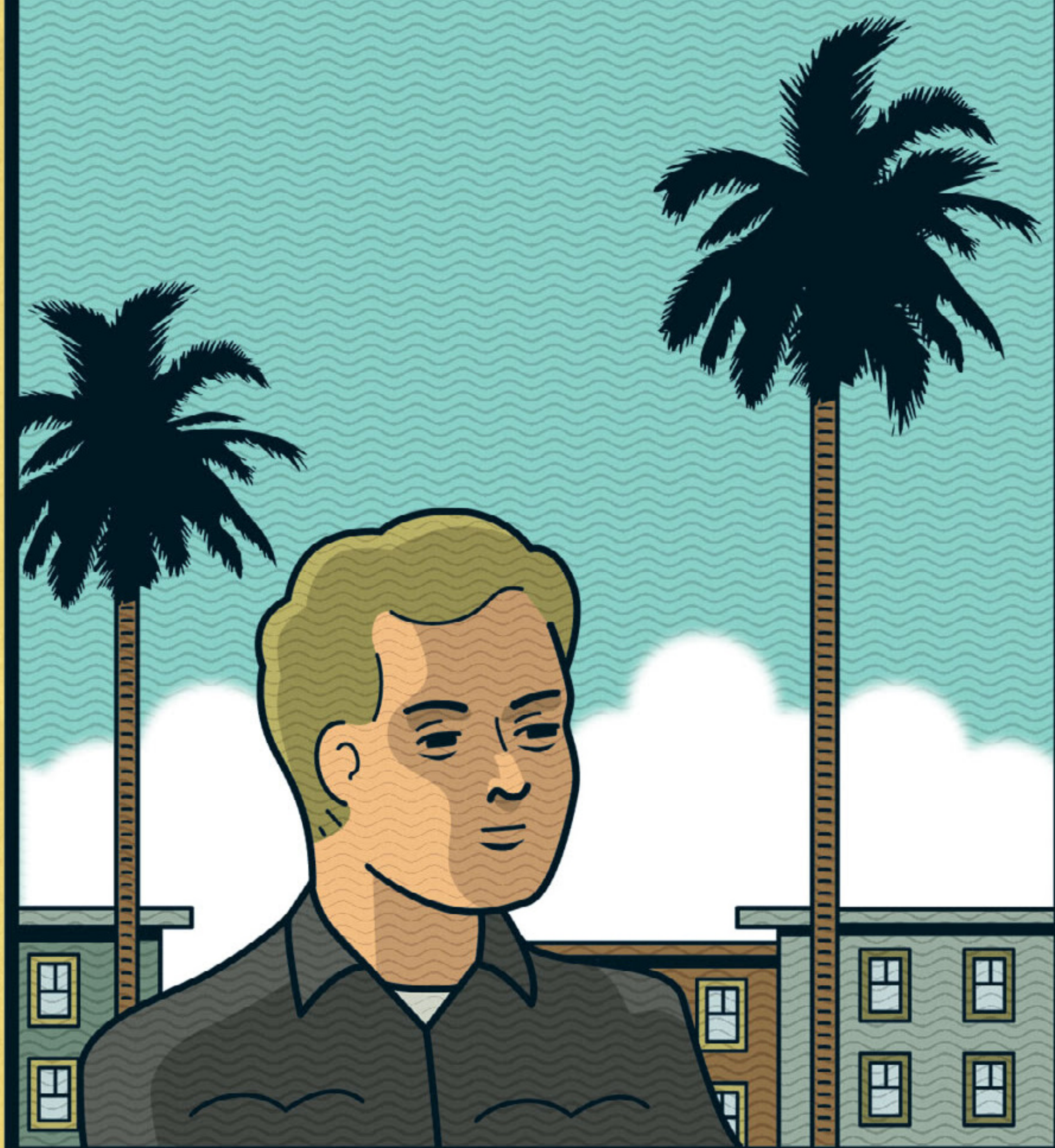
JIM SPENT THE REST OF THE
DAY IN THE APARTMENT.
HE TOOK OUT THE GARBAGE
AND AIRED OUT THE PLACE.
NOTHING TOO MUCH, IT
WAS SUPPOSED TO LOOK
DOWN AND OUT.



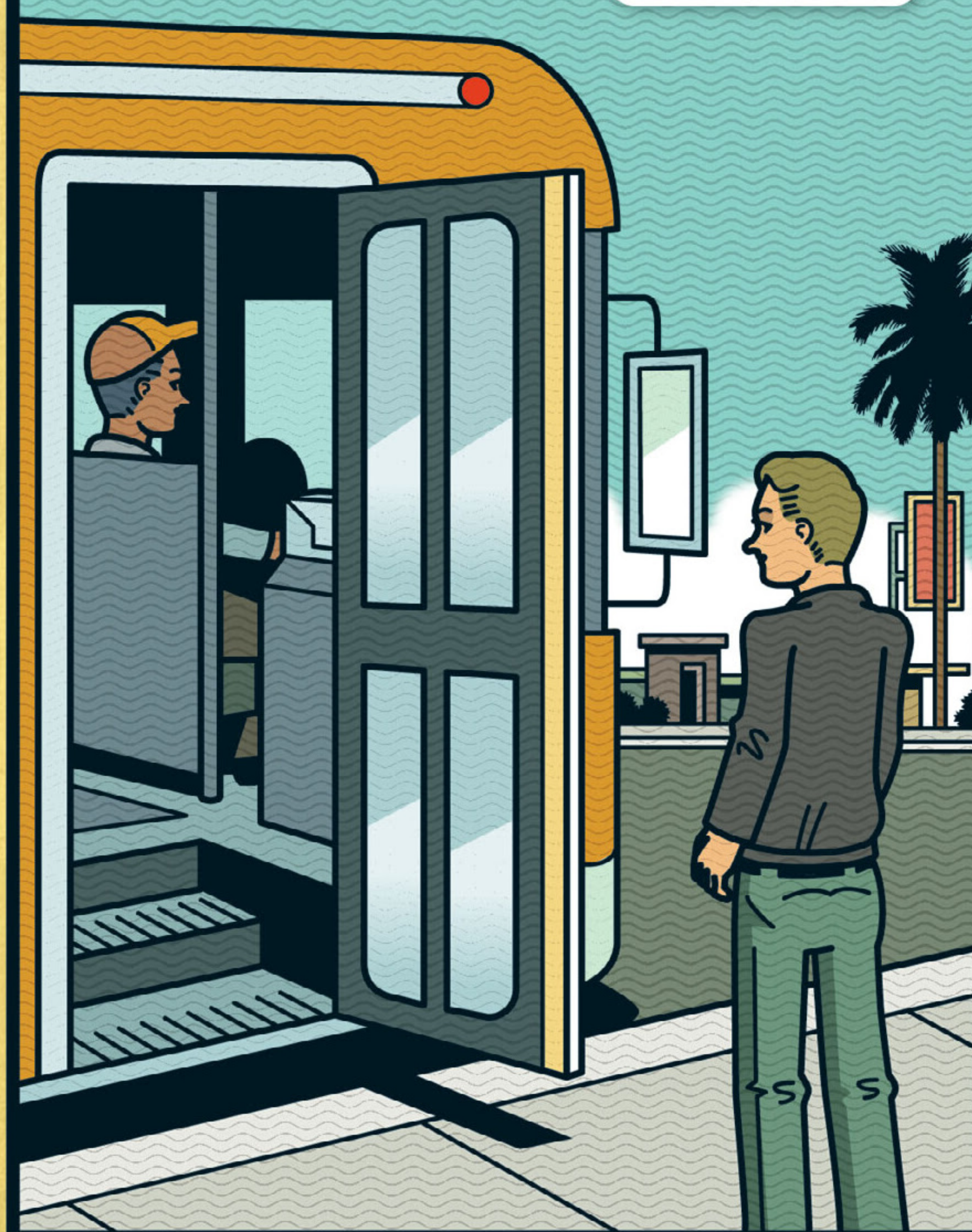
THE CAT LURKED ABOUT
AS HE CLEANED UP.
SHE SEEMED PLEASED
TO HAVE COMPANY.



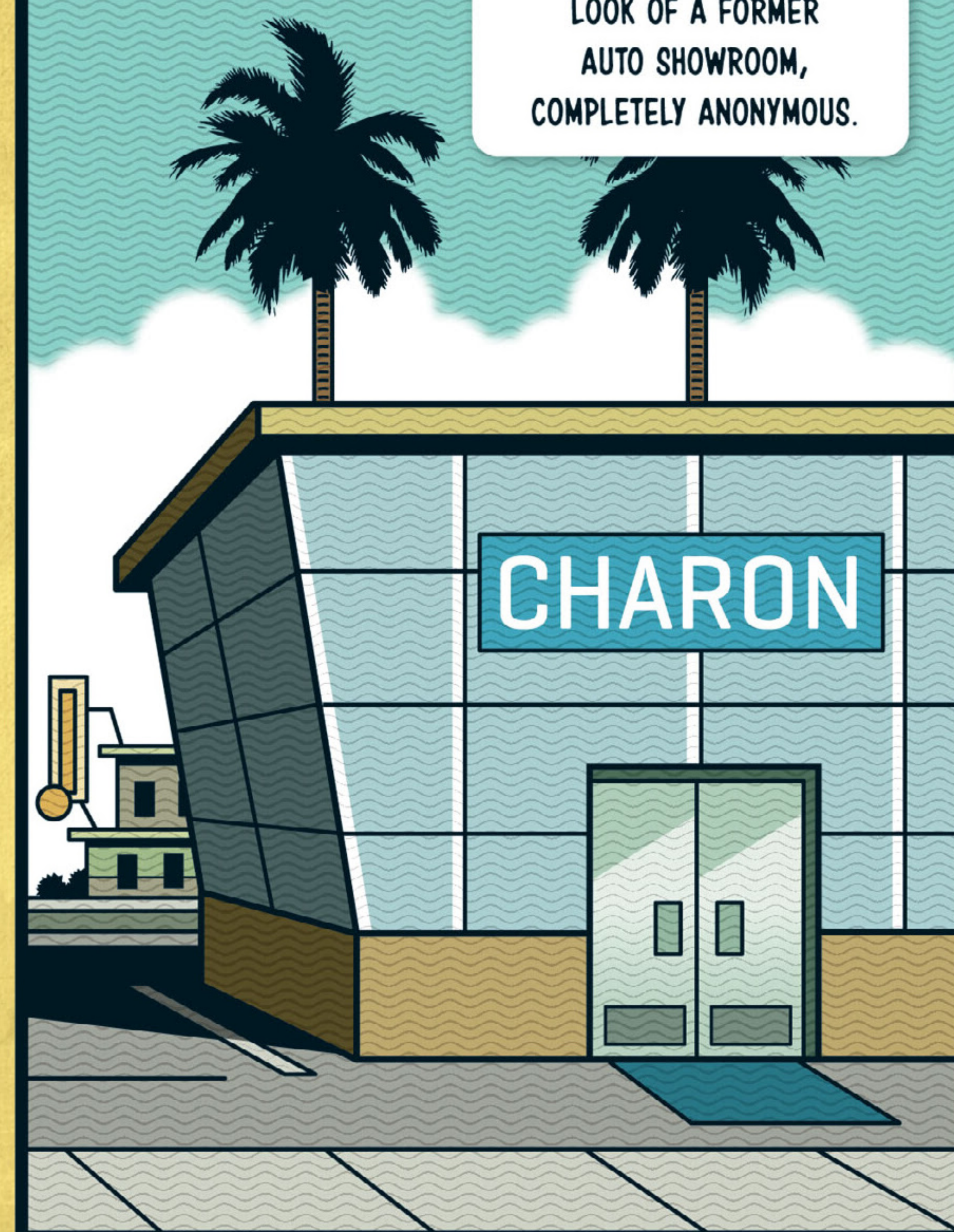
THE NEXT MORNING WAS SUNNY.
HE OPENED UP A MAP AND
PLOTTED HIS ROUTE TO
THE C.H.A.R.O.N. OFFICES.



HE TOOK THE BUS
TO MAKE IT MORE
BELIEVABLE.



HE ARRIVED AN HOUR LATER
AT THE OFFICE. IT HAD THE
LOOK OF A FORMER
AUTO SHOWROOM,
COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.





WELCOME TO THE
C.H.A.R.O.N.
GROUP

COMMUNITY
HEALTH
AND
RESOURCES
OPPORTUNITY
NETWORK

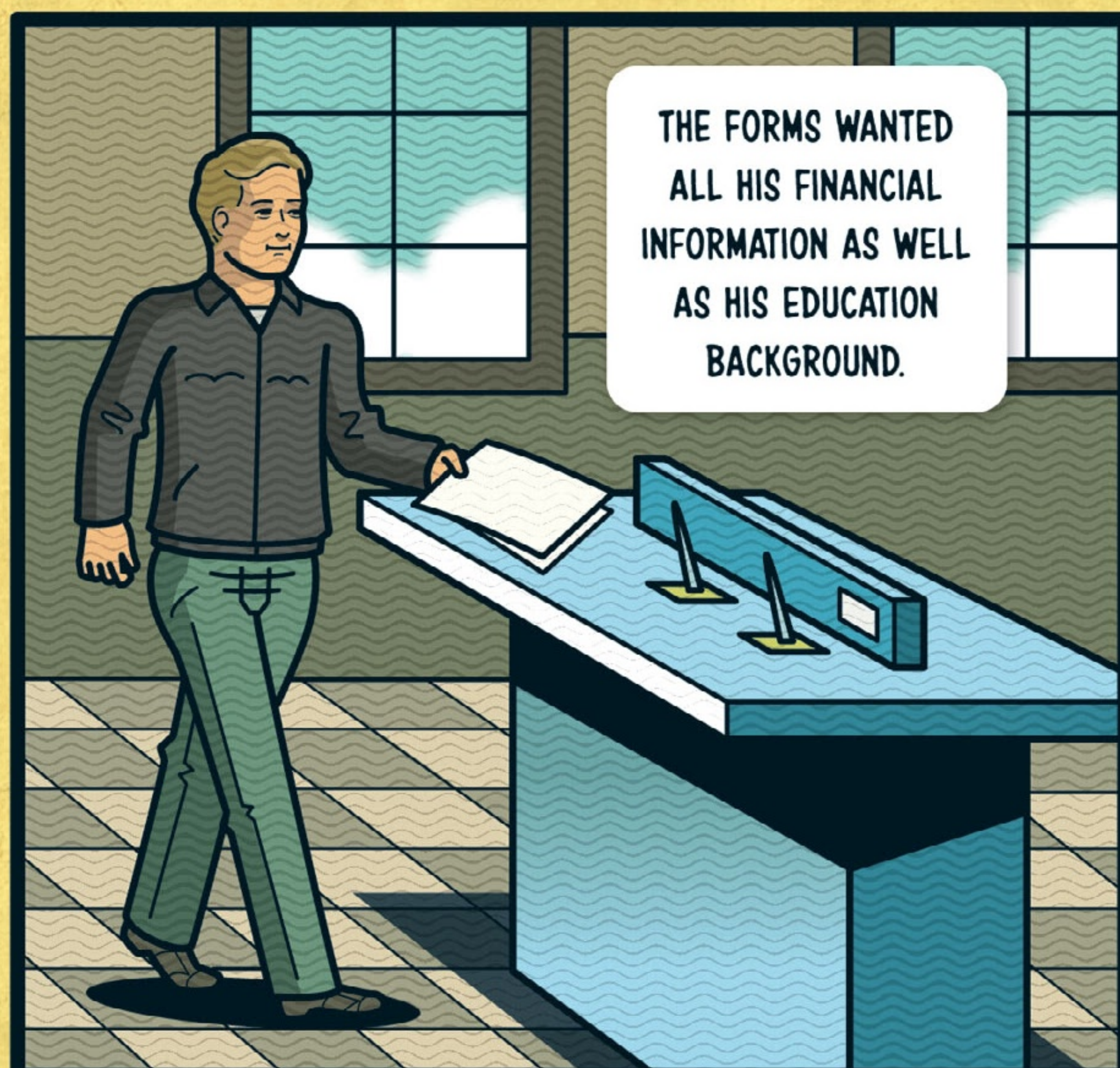
THE DESK IN C.H.A.R.O.N.'S LOBBY
WAS MANNED BY SMILING
EMPLOYEES IN MATCHING POLO
SHIRTS AND HEADSETS.



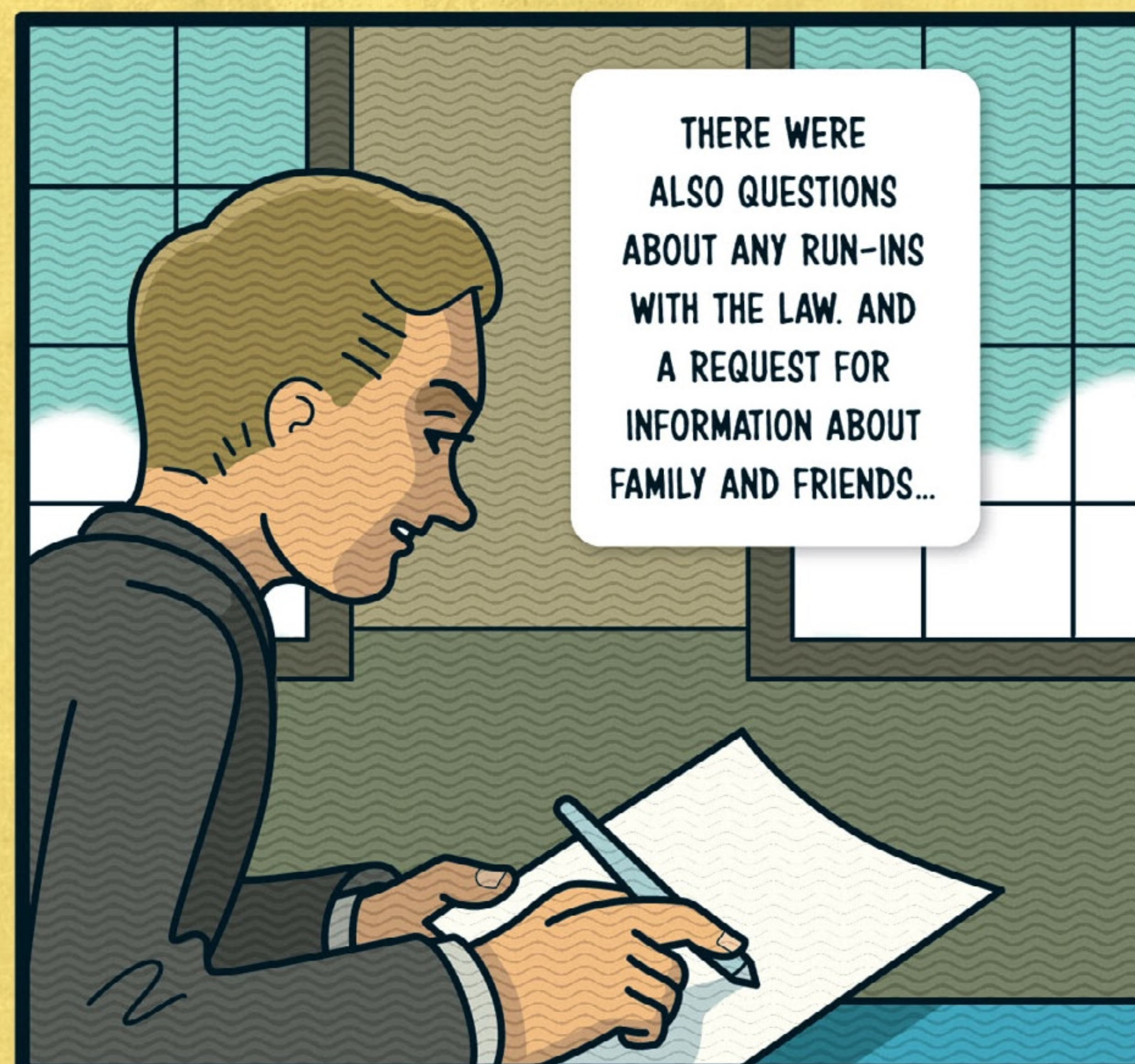
JIM INTRODUCED HIMSELF AND EXPLAINED
THAT A FRIEND HAD USED THE SERVICE
AND FOUND IT VERY HELPFUL. WHEN HE
PUT THE SILVER COIN ON THE COUNTER,
THE WOMAN'S SMILE BROADENED.



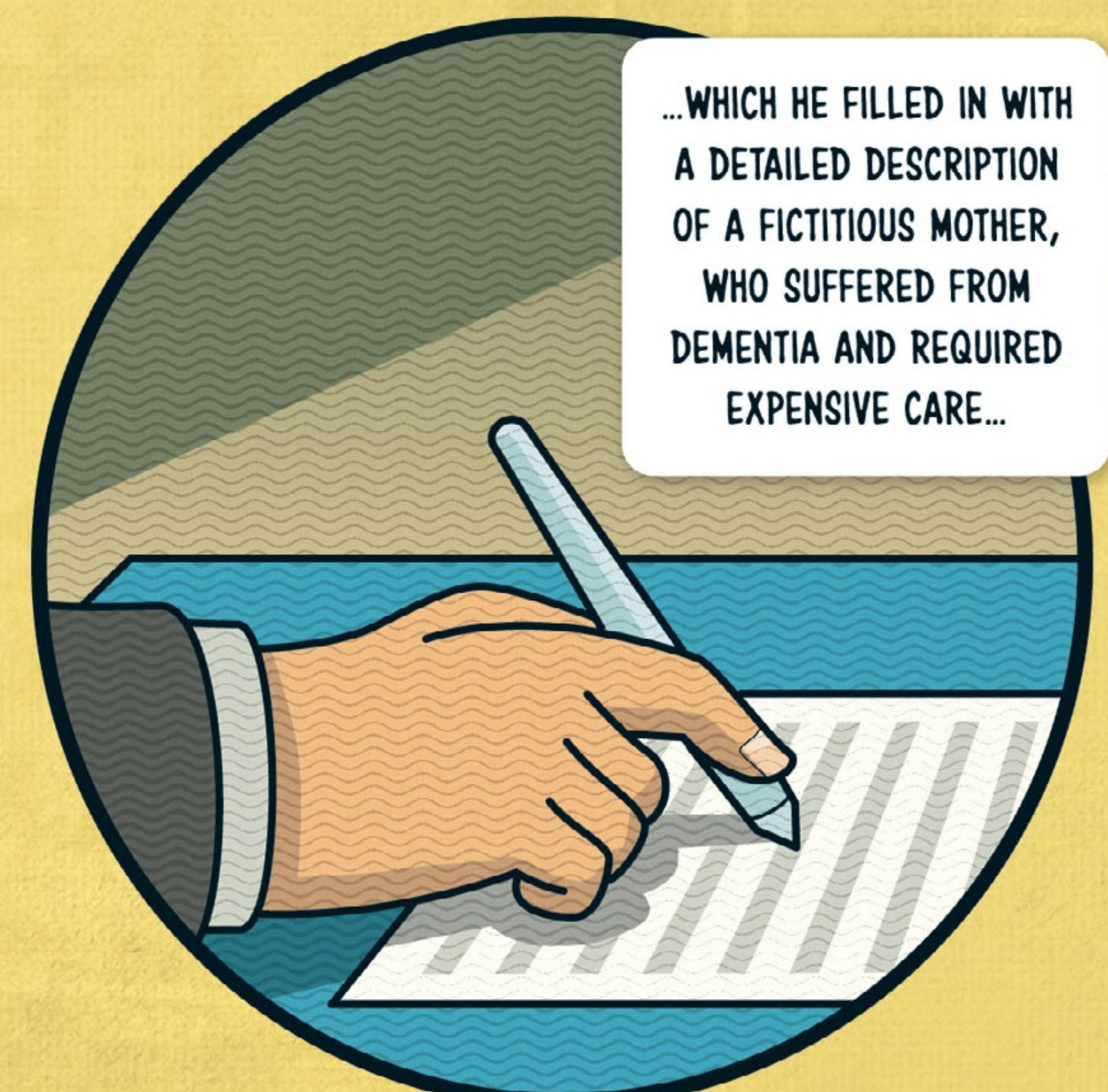
LET'S GET YOU STARTED
ON OUR REGISTRATION,
MR. JARVIS. I'LL NEED
YOU TO FILL OUT
THESE FORMS.



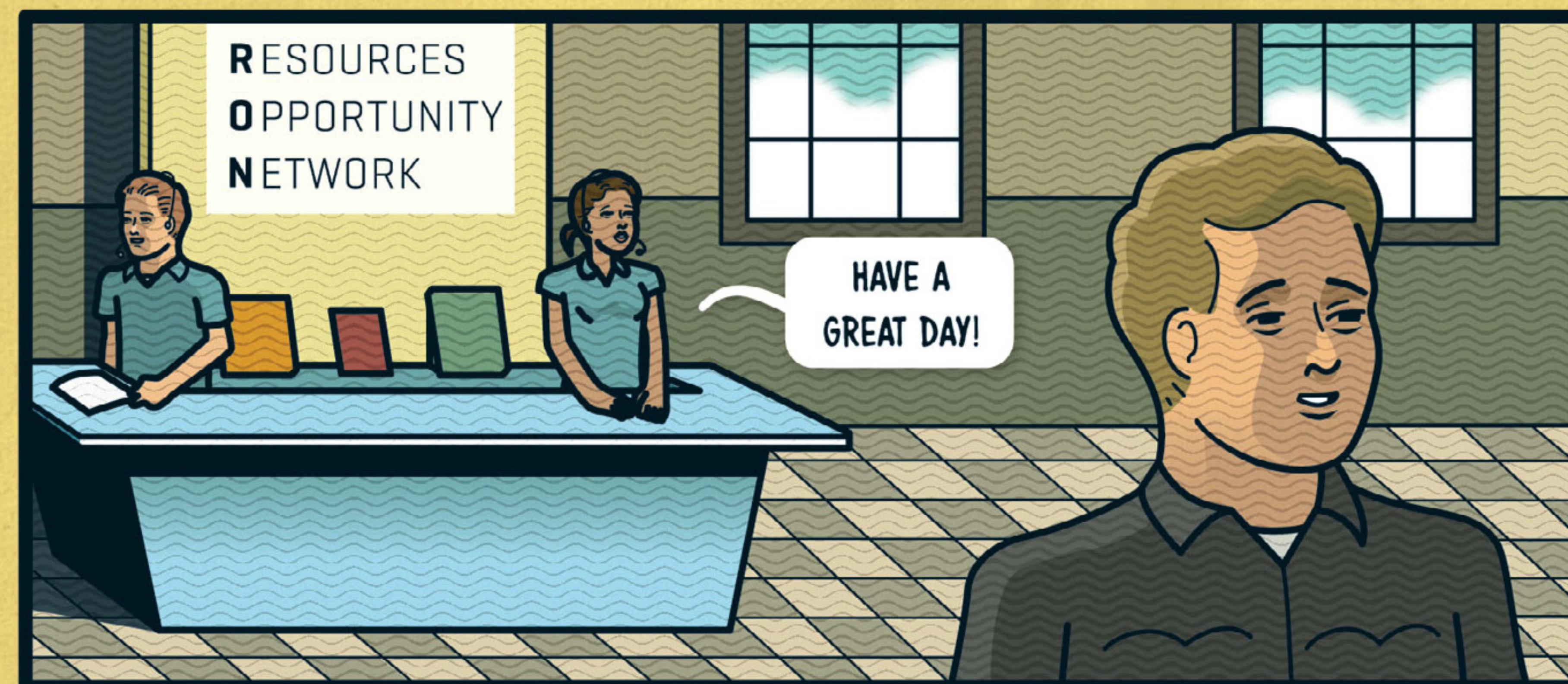
THE FORMS WANTED
ALL HIS FINANCIAL
INFORMATION AS WELL
AS HIS EDUCATION
BACKGROUND.

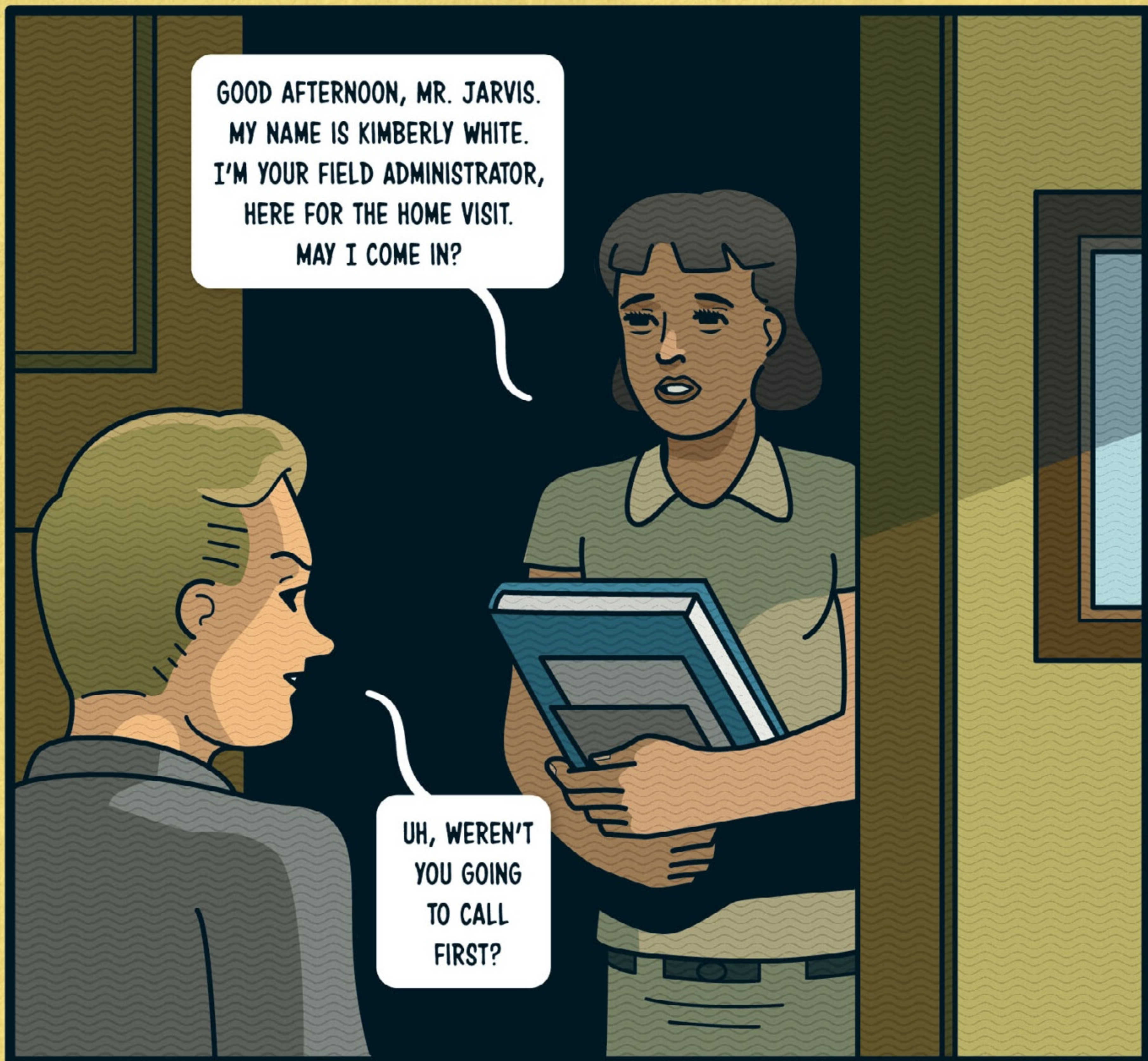
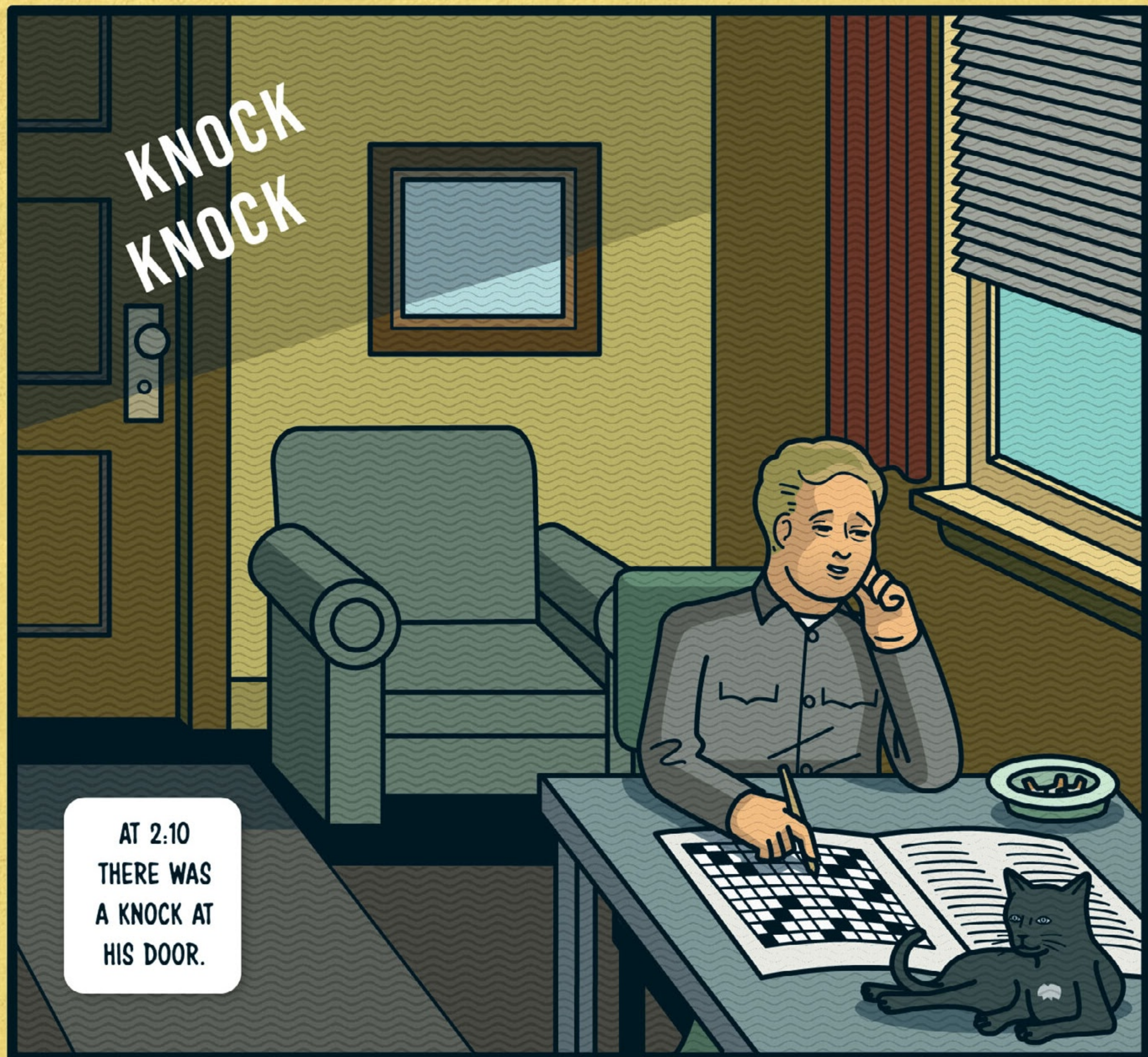


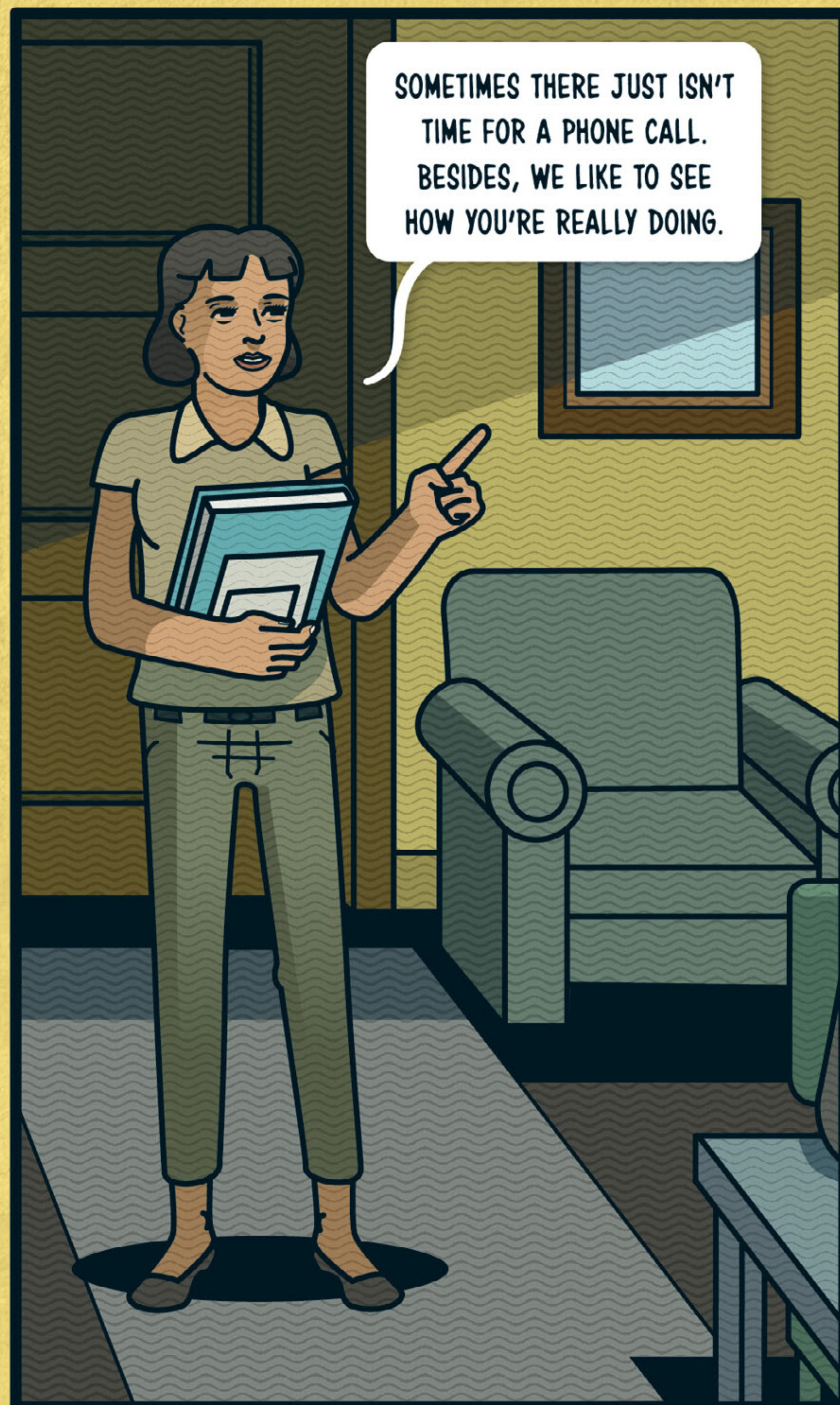
THERE WERE
ALSO QUESTIONS
ABOUT ANY RUN-INS
WITH THE LAW. AND
A REQUEST FOR
INFORMATION ABOUT
FAMILY AND FRIENDS...



...WHICH HE FILLED IN WITH
A DETAILED DESCRIPTION
OF A FICTITIOUS MOTHER,
WHO SUFFERED FROM
DEMENTIA AND REQUIRED
EXPENSIVE CARE...







SOMETIMES THERE JUST ISN'T
TIME FOR A PHONE CALL.
BESIDES, WE LIKE TO SEE
HOW YOU'RE REALLY DOING.



KIMBERLY ENGAGED HIM IN
SMALL TALK AS SHE WALKED
AROUND THE APARTMENT.
SHE STOPPED OCCASIONALLY
TO LOOK IN THE CLOSETS
AND THE DRAWERS.



WOULD YOU SAY
YOUR FINANCIAL
DISTRESS IS
DESTROYING
YOUR LIFE?

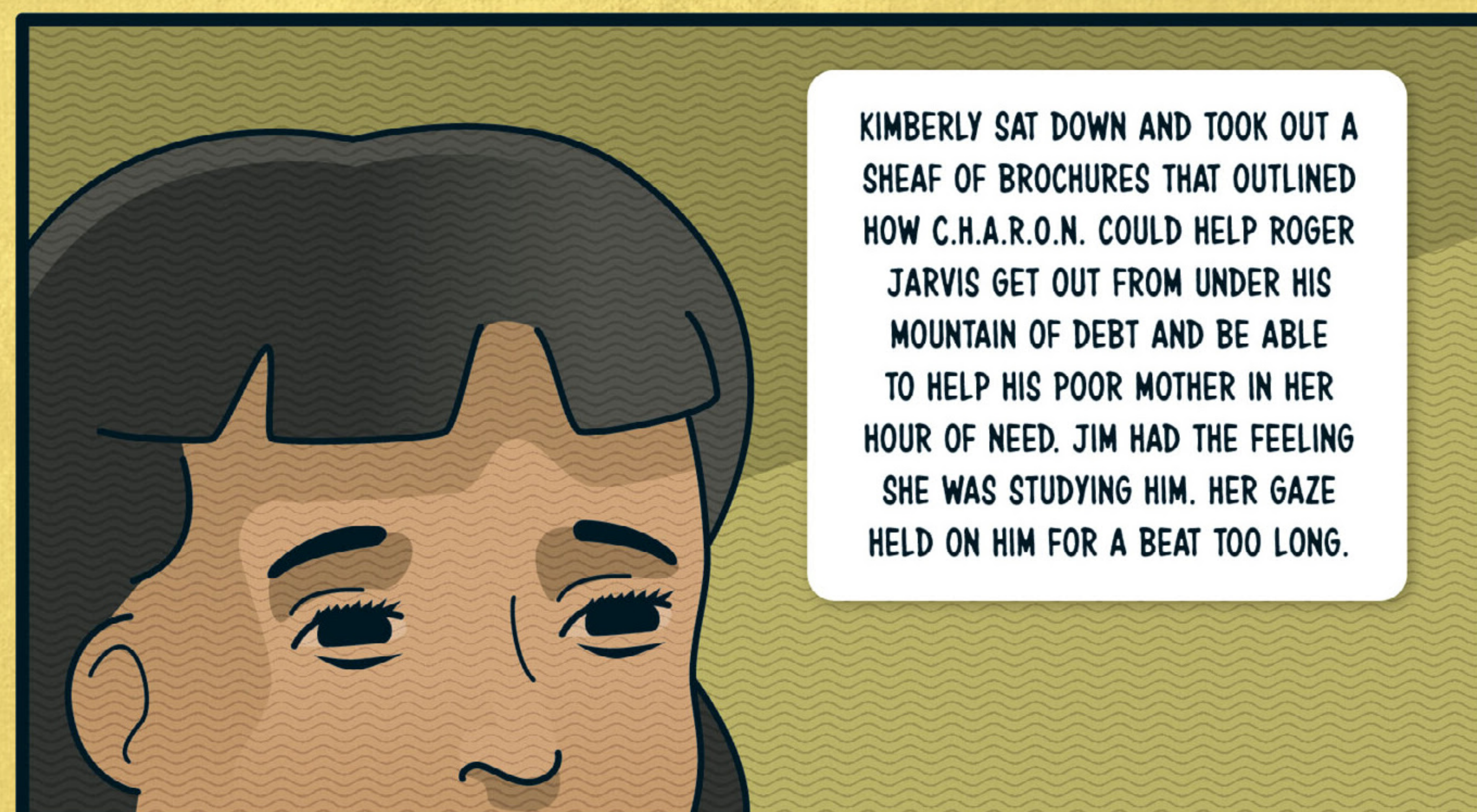
SHE OPENED THE
REFRIGERATOR,
GRIMACED,
AND QUICKLY
CLOSED IT.



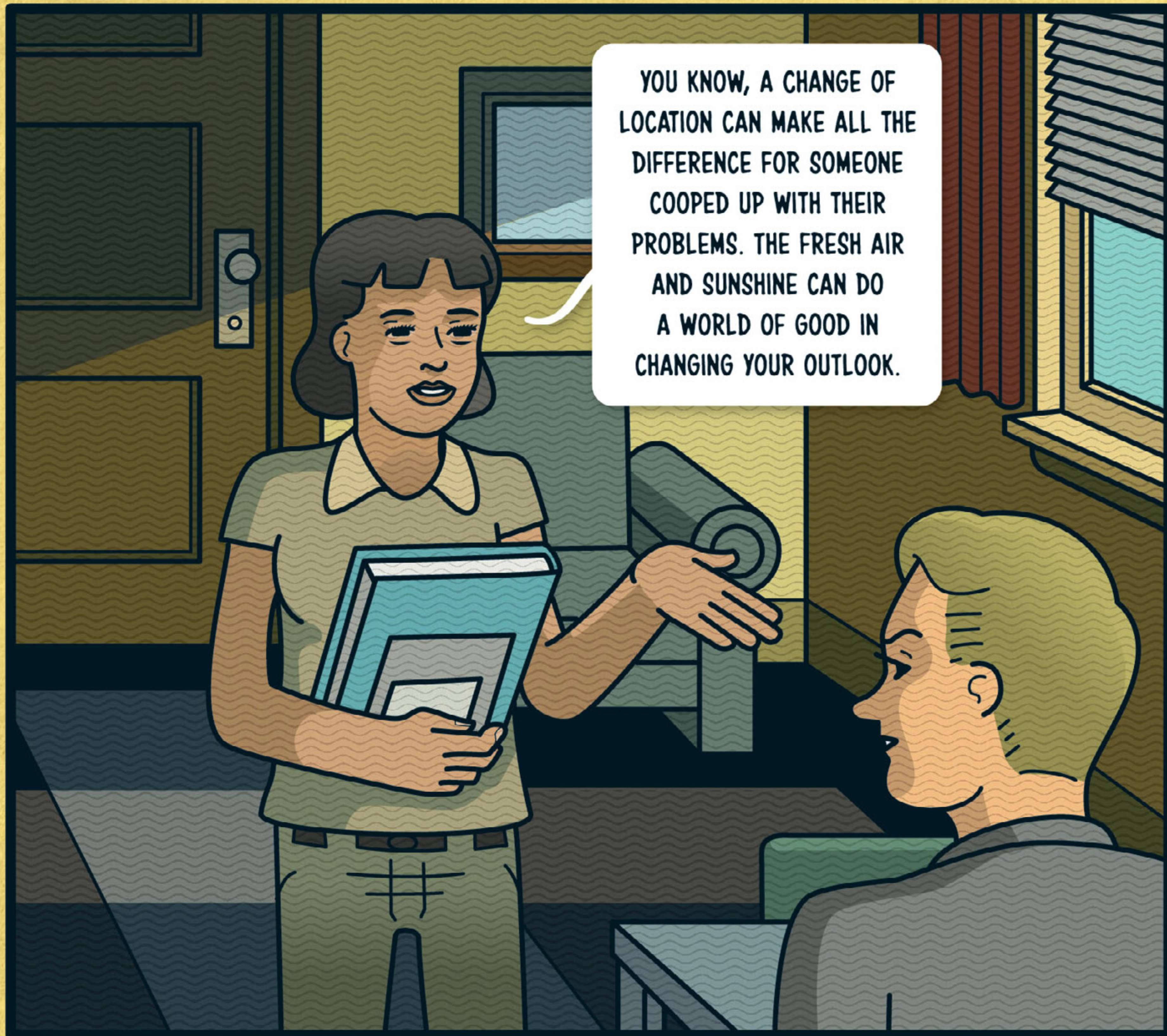
IN A BETTER WORLD, WOULDN'T
YOU LIKE TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE
FOR YOUR AILING MOTHER?



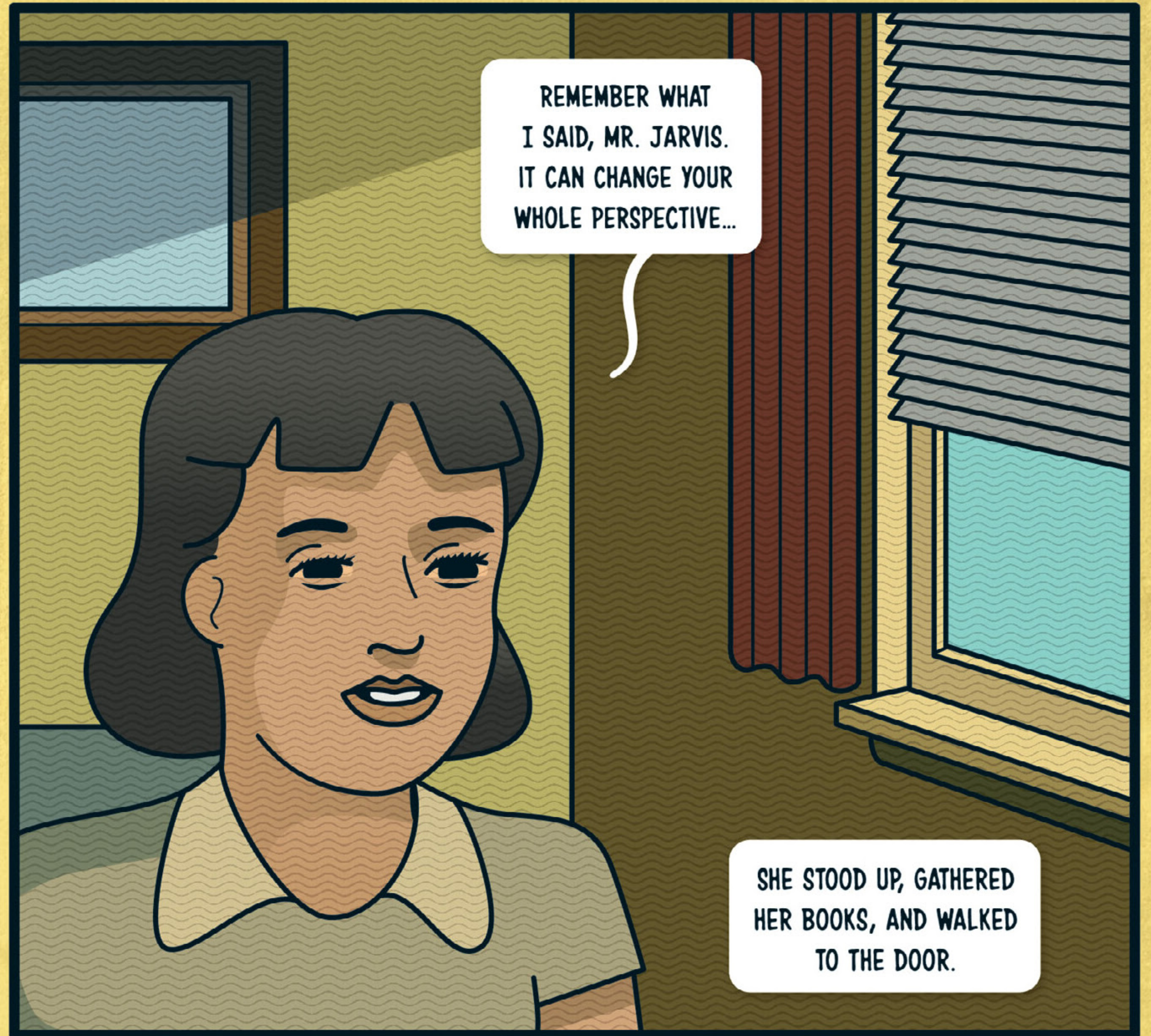
YEAH, THAT
BOTHERS ME
A LOT...



KIMBERLY SAT DOWN AND TOOK OUT A
SHEAF OF BROCHURES THAT OUTLINED
HOW C.H.A.R.O.N. COULD HELP ROGER
JARVIS GET OUT FROM UNDER HIS
MOUNTAIN OF DEBT AND BE ABLE
TO HELP HIS POOR MOTHER IN HER
HOUR OF NEED. JIM HAD THE FEELING
SHE WAS STUDYING HIM. HER GAZE
HELD ON HIM FOR A BEAT TOO LONG.



YOU KNOW, A CHANGE OF LOCATION CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE FOR SOMEONE COOPED UP WITH THEIR PROBLEMS. THE FRESH AIR AND SUNSHINE CAN DO A WORLD OF GOOD IN CHANGING YOUR OUTLOOK.

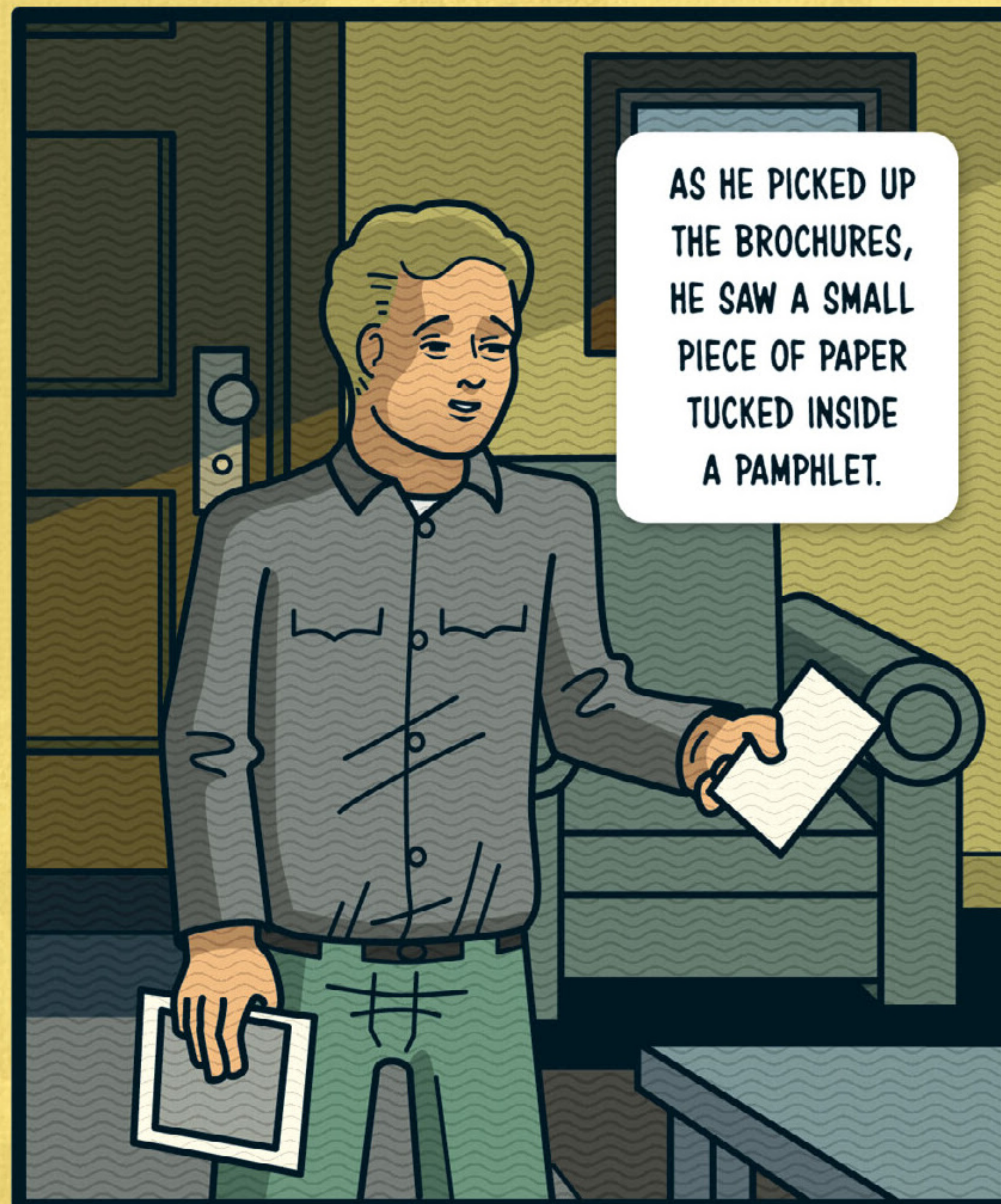


REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, MR. JARVIS. IT CAN CHANGE YOUR WHOLE PERSPECTIVE...

SHE STOOD UP, GATHERED HER BOOKS, AND WALKED TO THE DOOR.



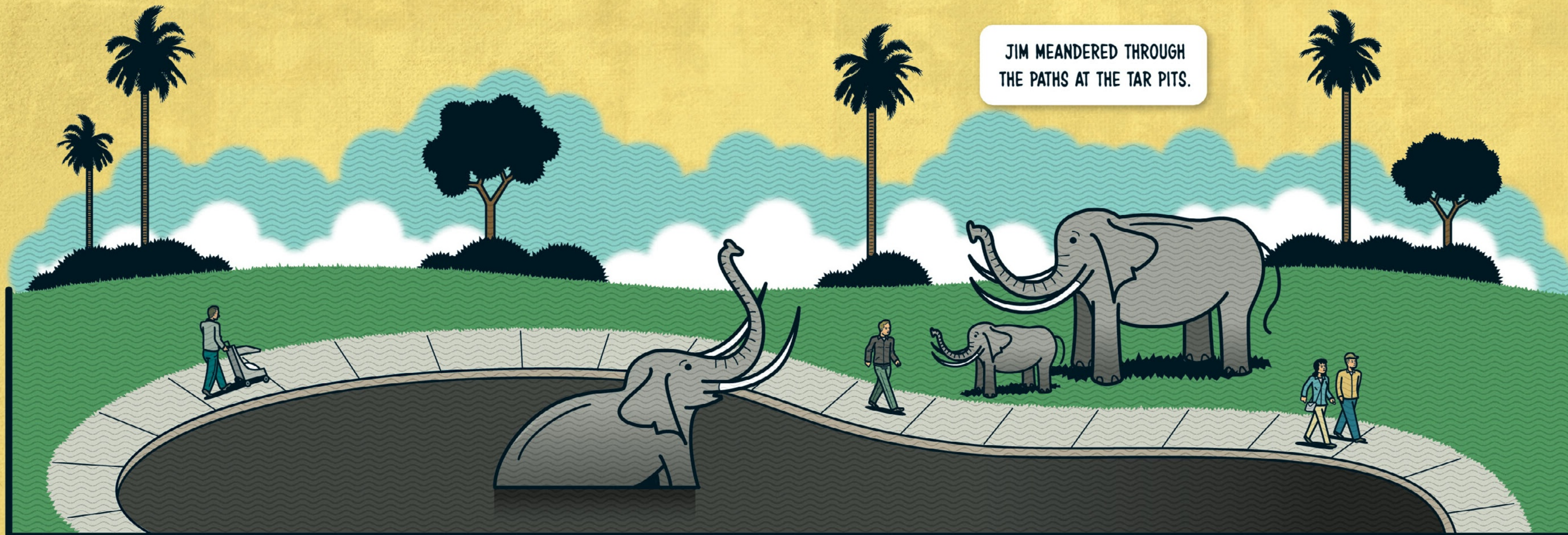
JIM THANKED HER AGAIN.



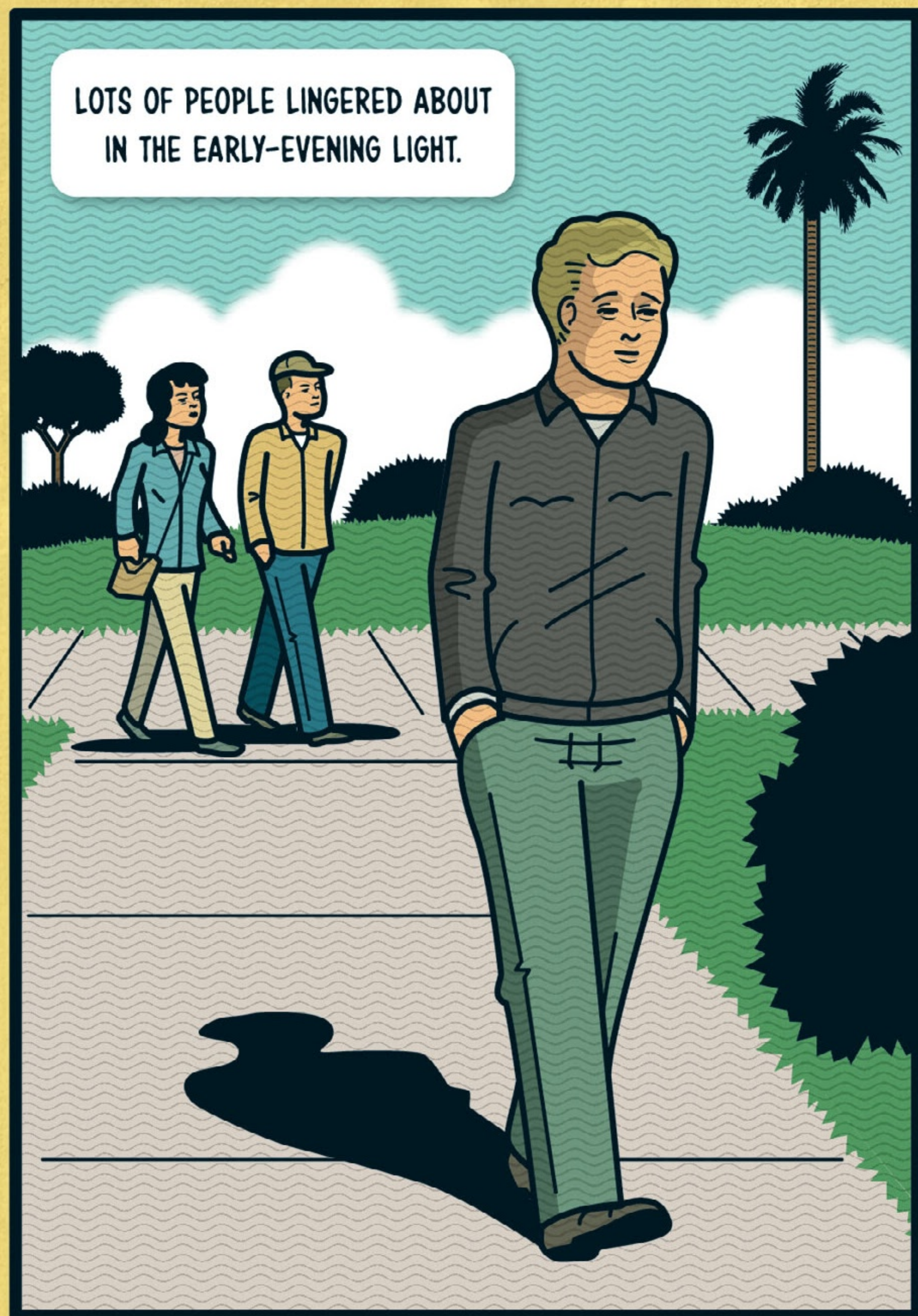
AS HE PICKED UP THE BROCHURES, HE SAW A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER TUCKED INSIDE A PAMPHLET.



A NOTE FROM KIMBERLY...



JIM MEANDERED THROUGH
THE PATHS AT THE TAR PITS.



LOTS OF PEOPLE LINGERED ABOUT
IN THE EARLY-EVENING LIGHT.

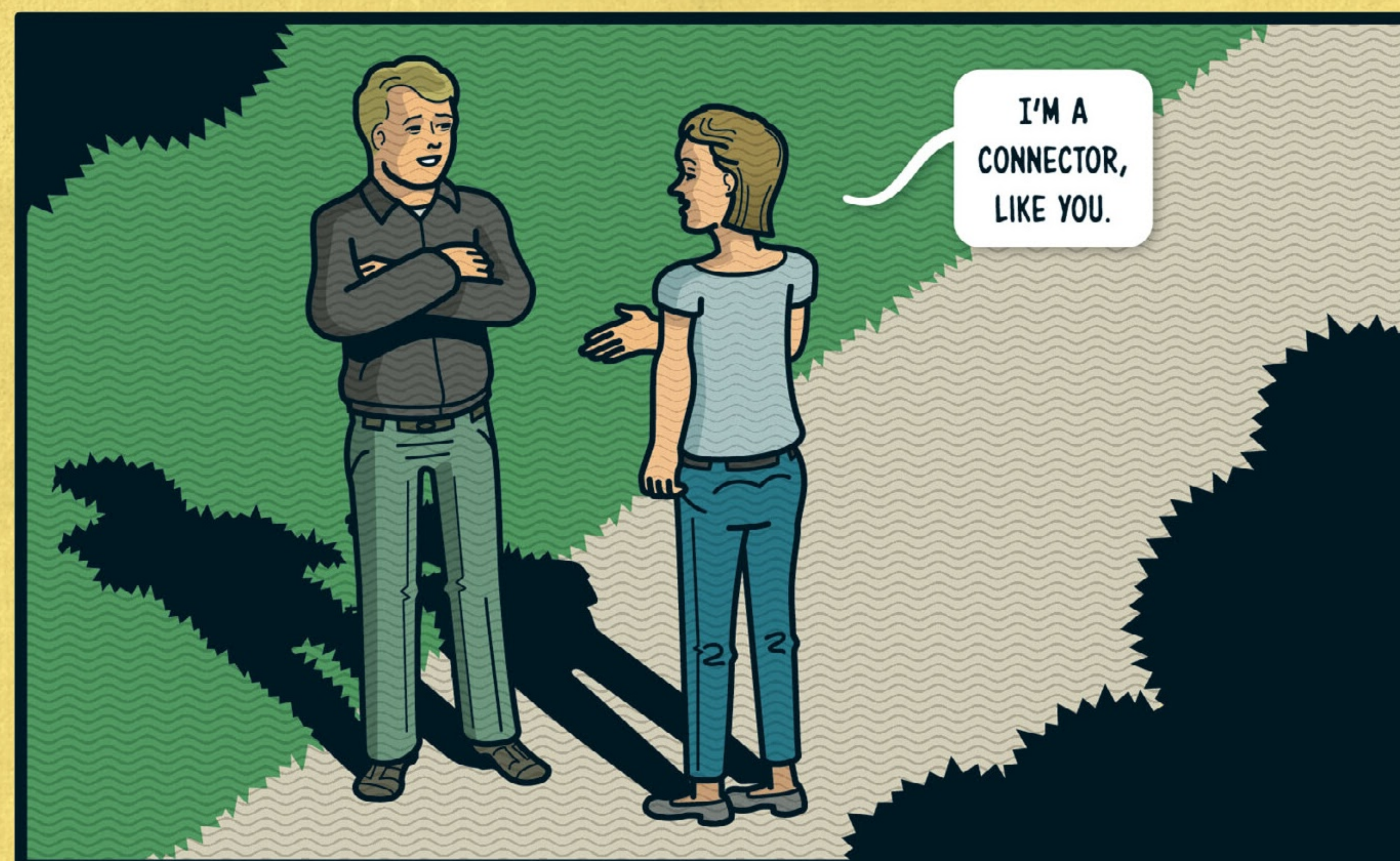
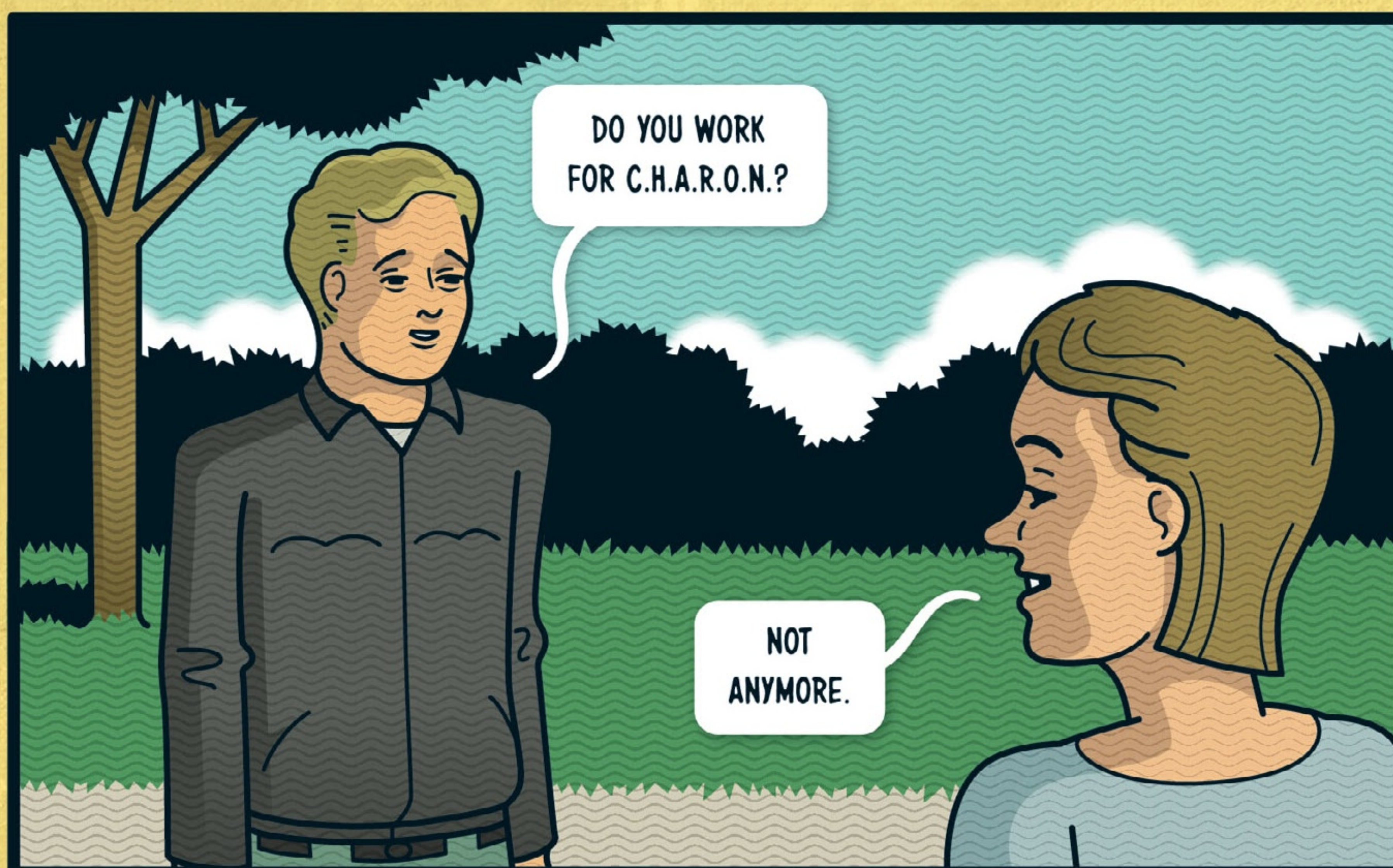


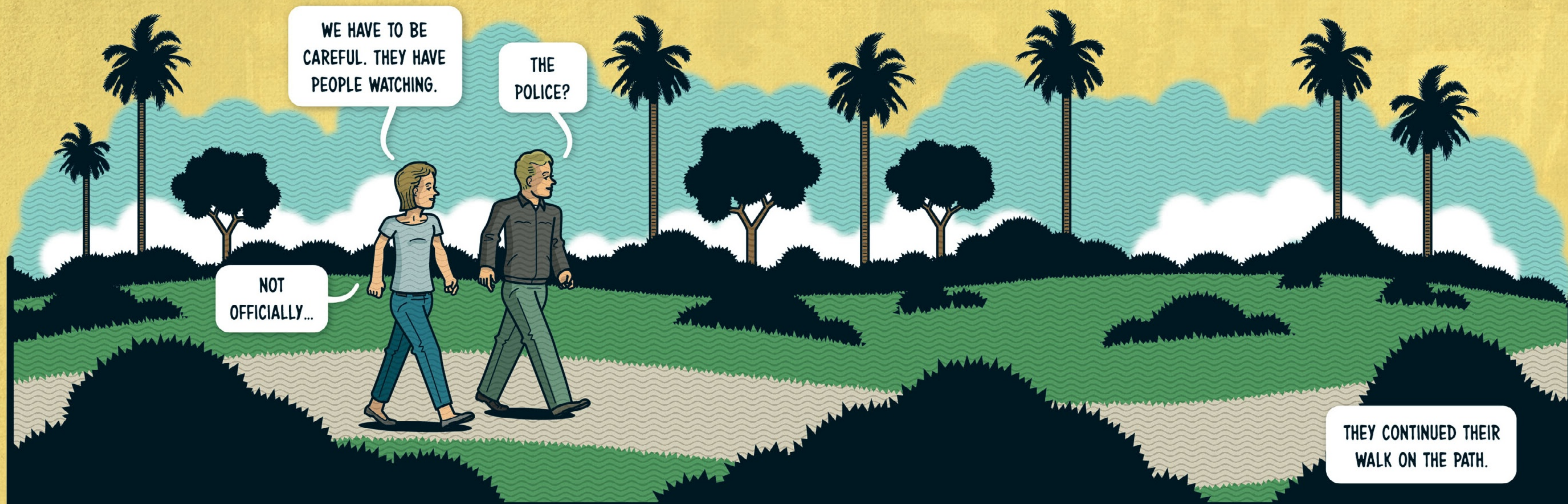
HE HEARD SOMEONE WALK
UP FROM BEHIND. IT WAS
KIMBERLY. AS SHE PASSED,
SHE WHISPERED TO HIM...

FOLLOW ME.
TURN RIGHT
WHEN YOU
REACH THE
FORK.



KIMBERLY
CONTINUED ON
AND DID NOT
LOOK BACK.





WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL. THEY HAVE PEOPLE WATCHING.

THE POLICE?

NOT OFFICIALLY...

THEY CONTINUED THEIR WALK ON THE PATH.



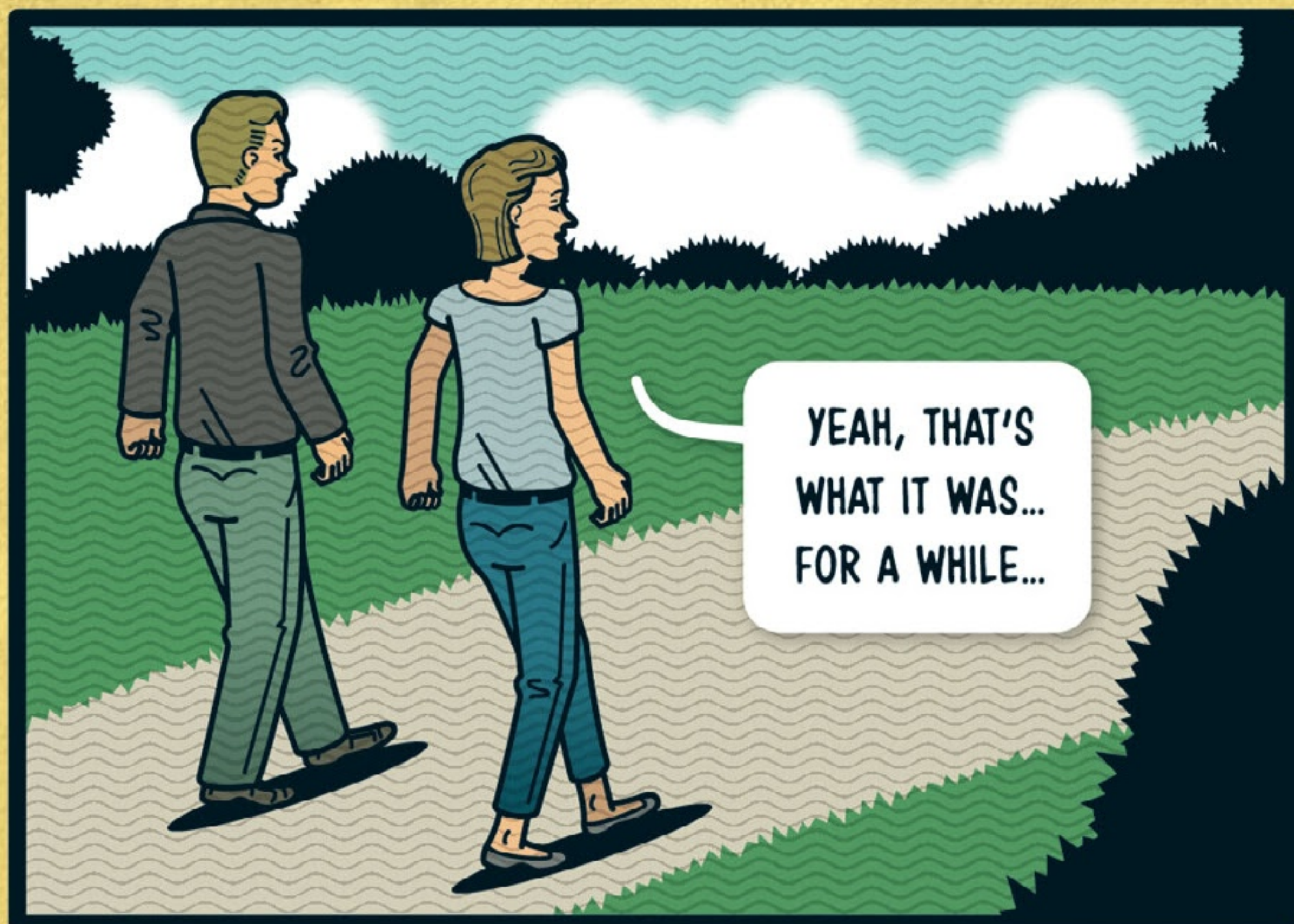
THEY STOPPED TALKING AS A MAN PASSED BY.



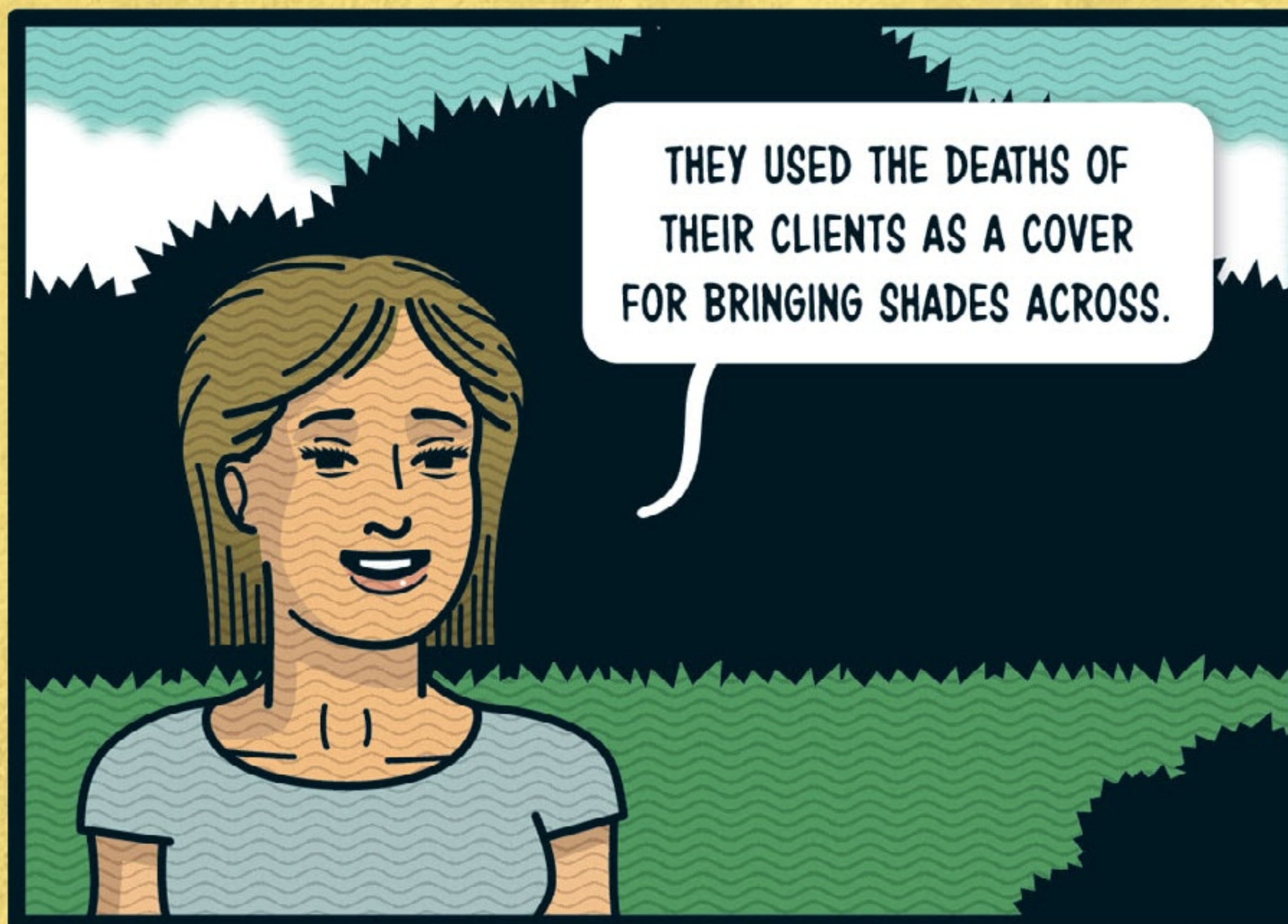
I WAS SENT HERE LAST YEAR BY THE P.O. HE WANTED ME TO WORK AT C.H.A.R.O.N. OF COURSE, YOU KNOW ALL THAT.



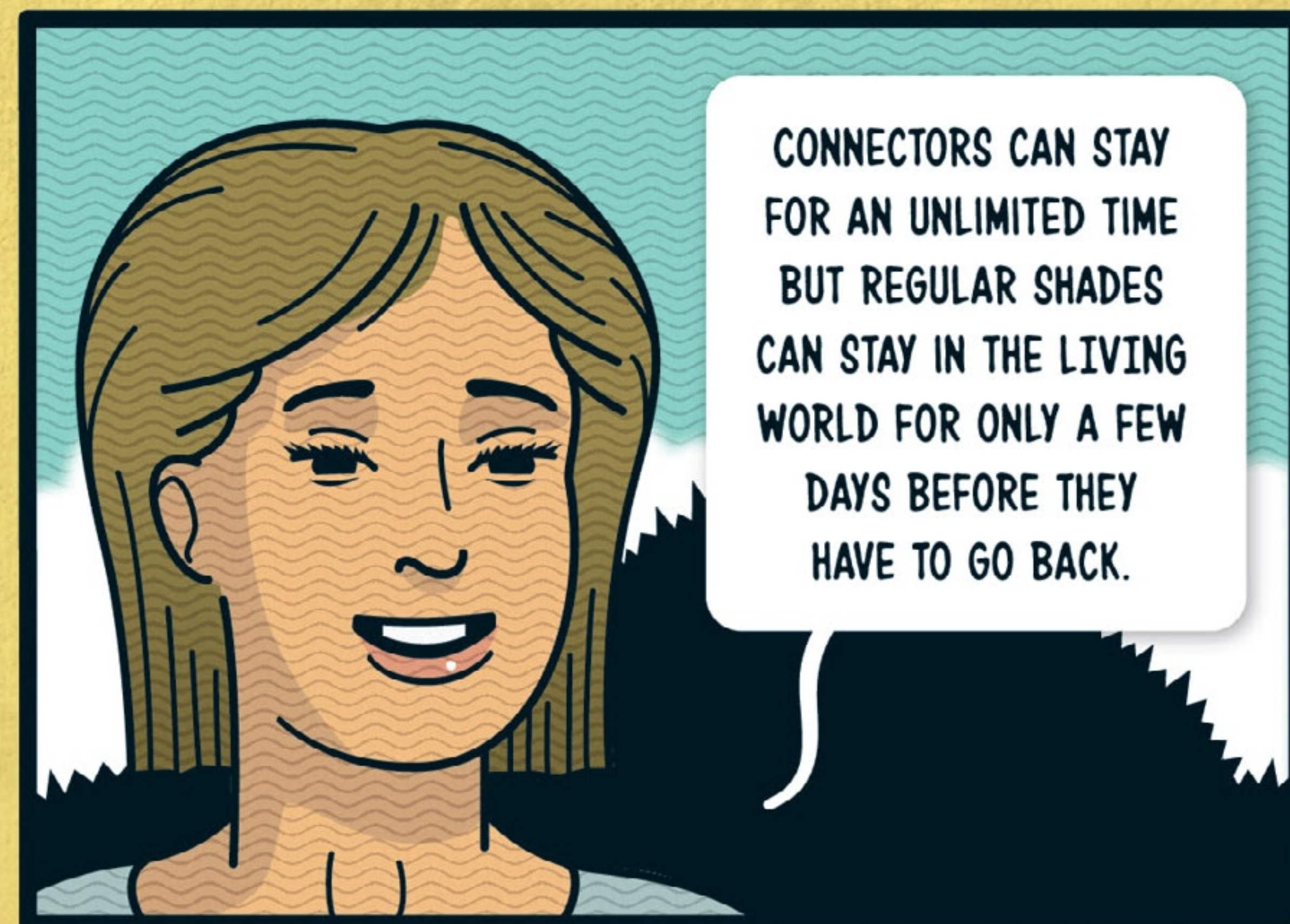
YEAH, I MET WITH LIEUTENANT BURGESS, AND HE TOLD ME ABOUT IT. A DEBT-RELIEF SERVICE THAT'S REALLY A FRONT FOR SMUGGLING SHADES...



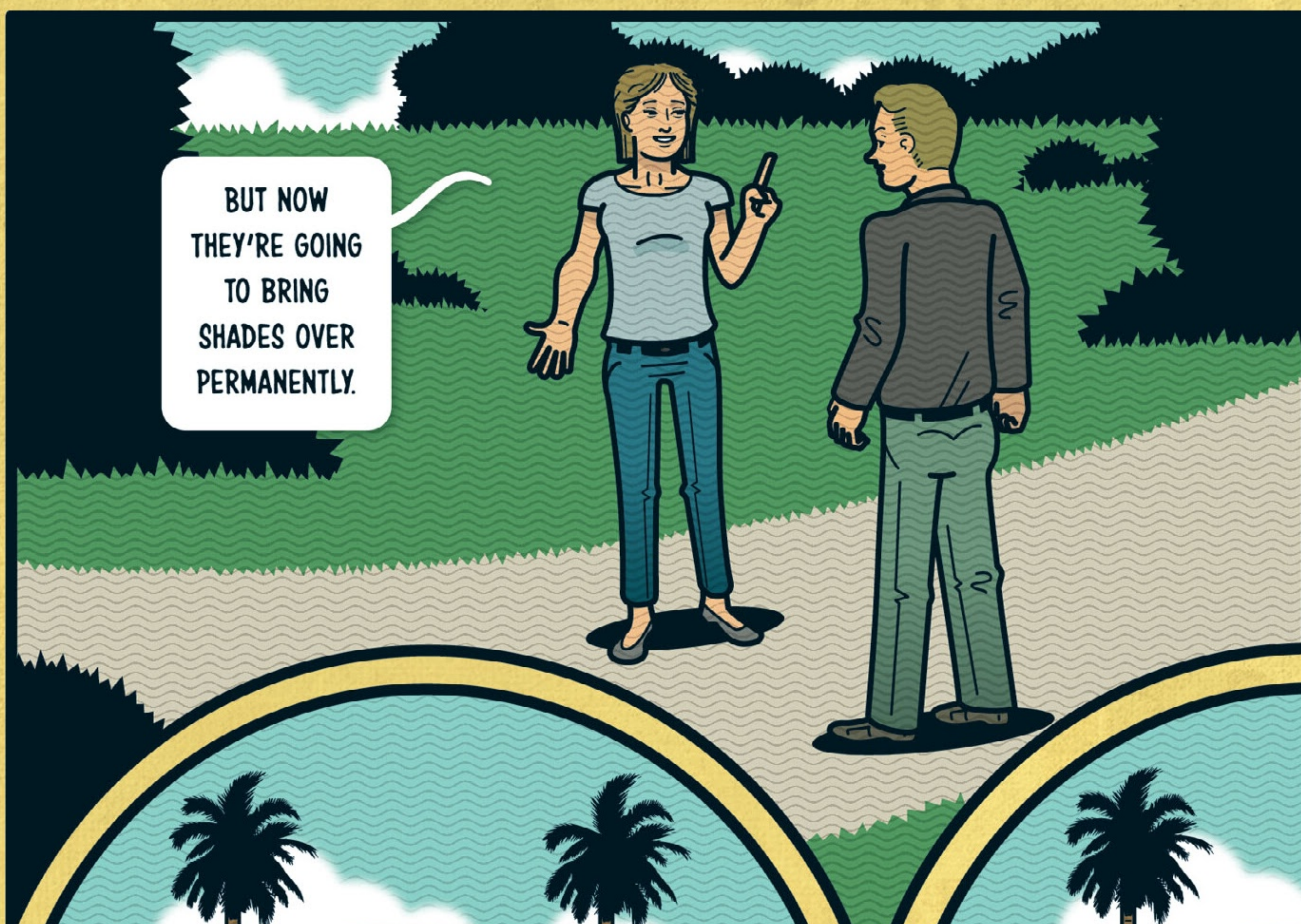
YEAH, THAT'S
WHAT IT WAS...
FOR A WHILE...



THEY USED THE DEATHS OF
THEIR CLIENTS AS A COVER
FOR BRINGING SHADES ACROSS.



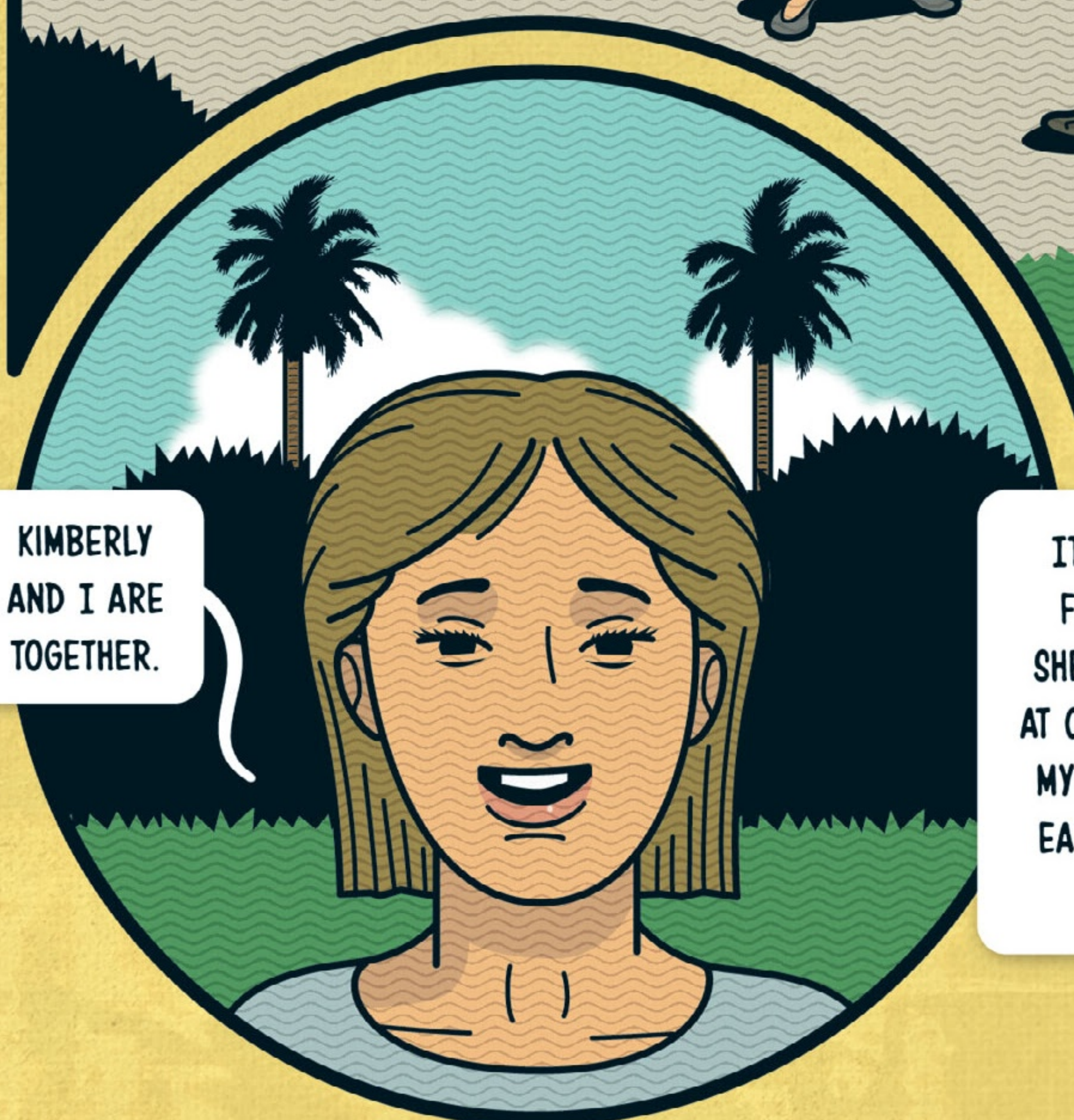
CONNECTORS CAN STAY
FOR AN UNLIMITED TIME
BUT REGULAR SHADES
CAN STAY IN THE LIVING
WORLD FOR ONLY A FEW
DAYS BEFORE THEY
HAVE TO GO BACK.



BUT NOW
THEY'RE GOING
TO BRING
SHADES OVER
PERMANENTLY.



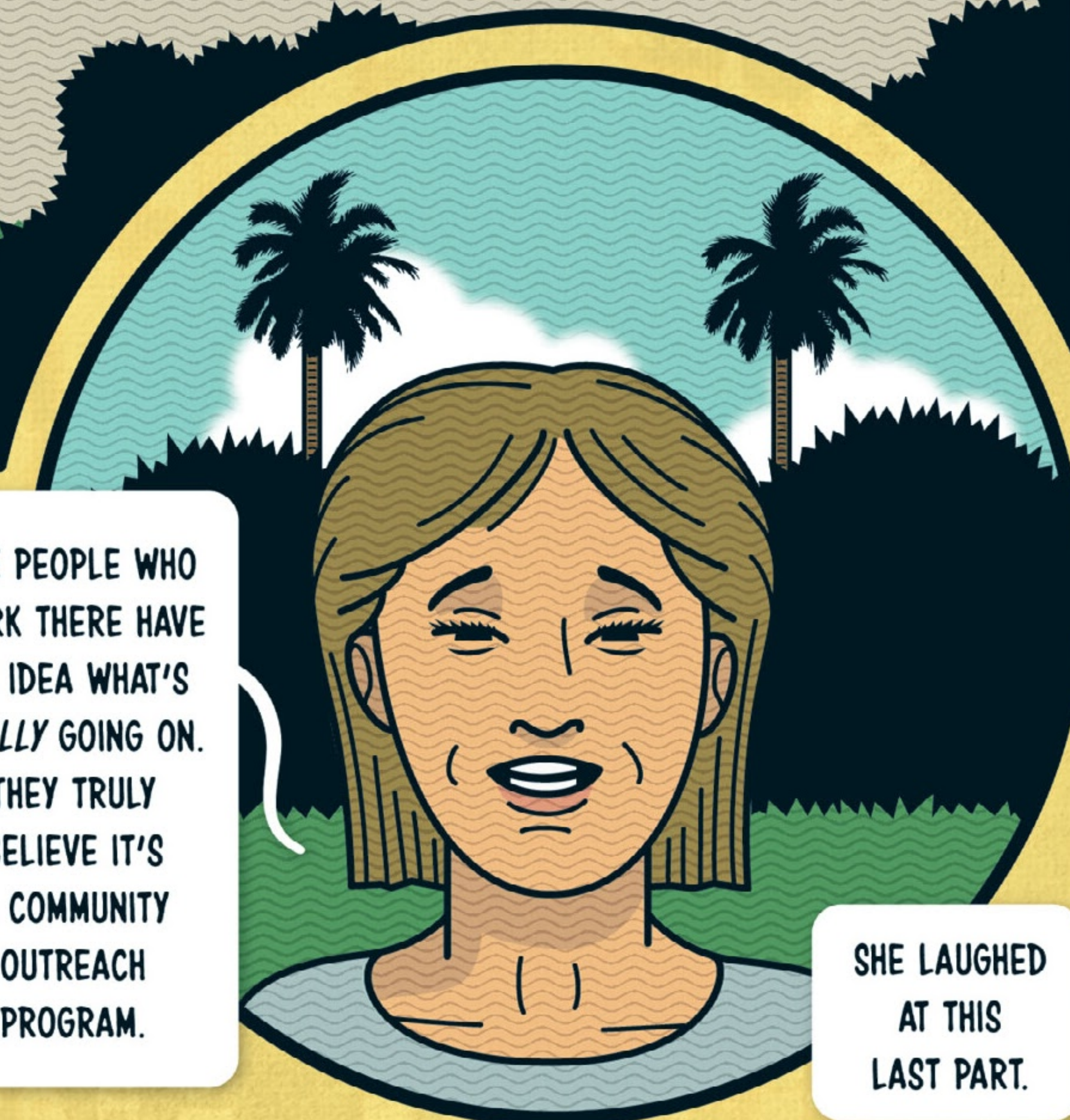
A FEW MONTHS AGO THE P.O. ASKED ME
TO COME BACK. I DON'T TRUST HIM AND
WANT TO STAY OUT OF A JAR, SO I WENT
UNDERGROUND, IN THE LIVING WORLD.



KIMBERLY
AND I ARE
TOGETHER.

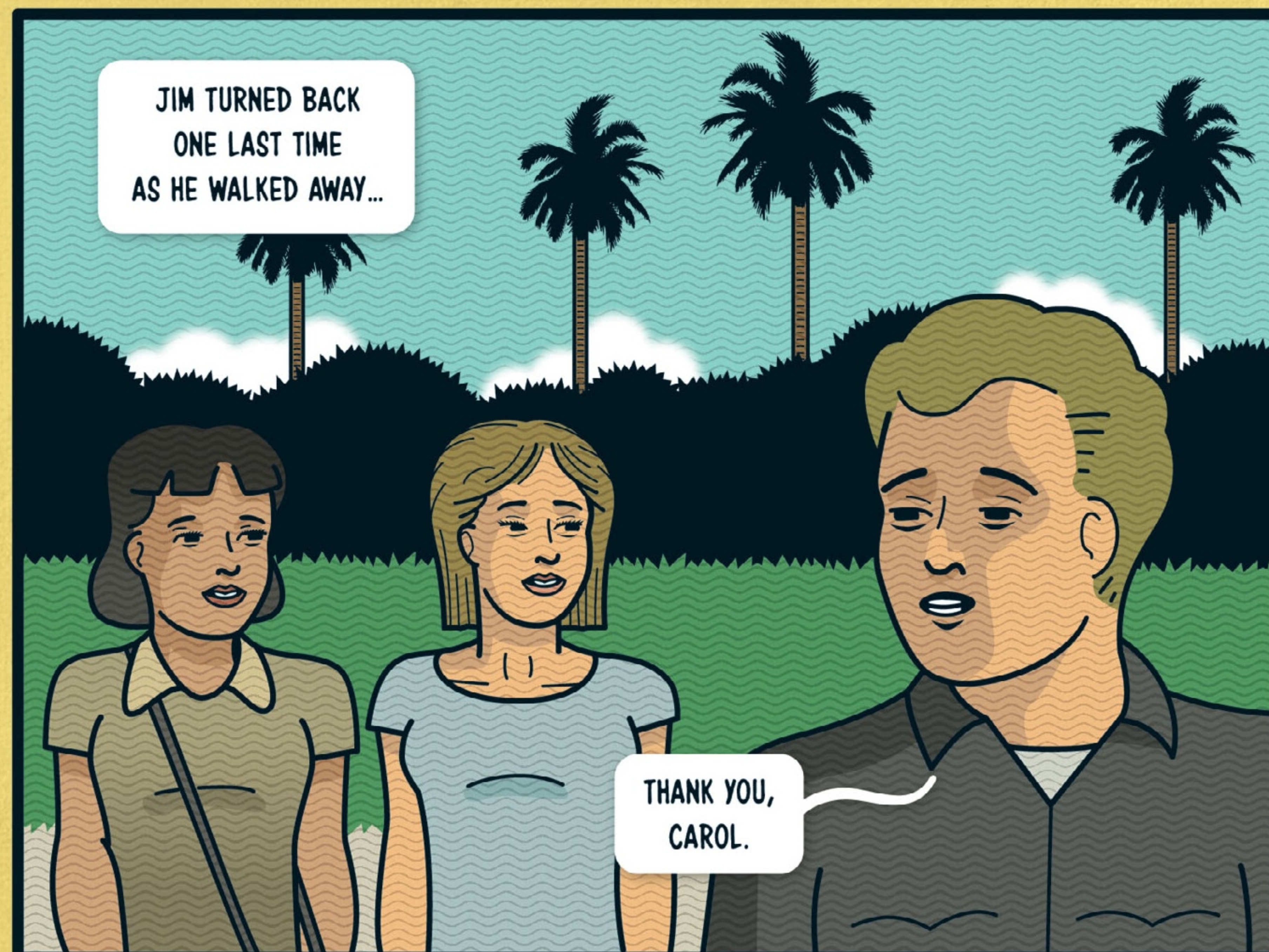
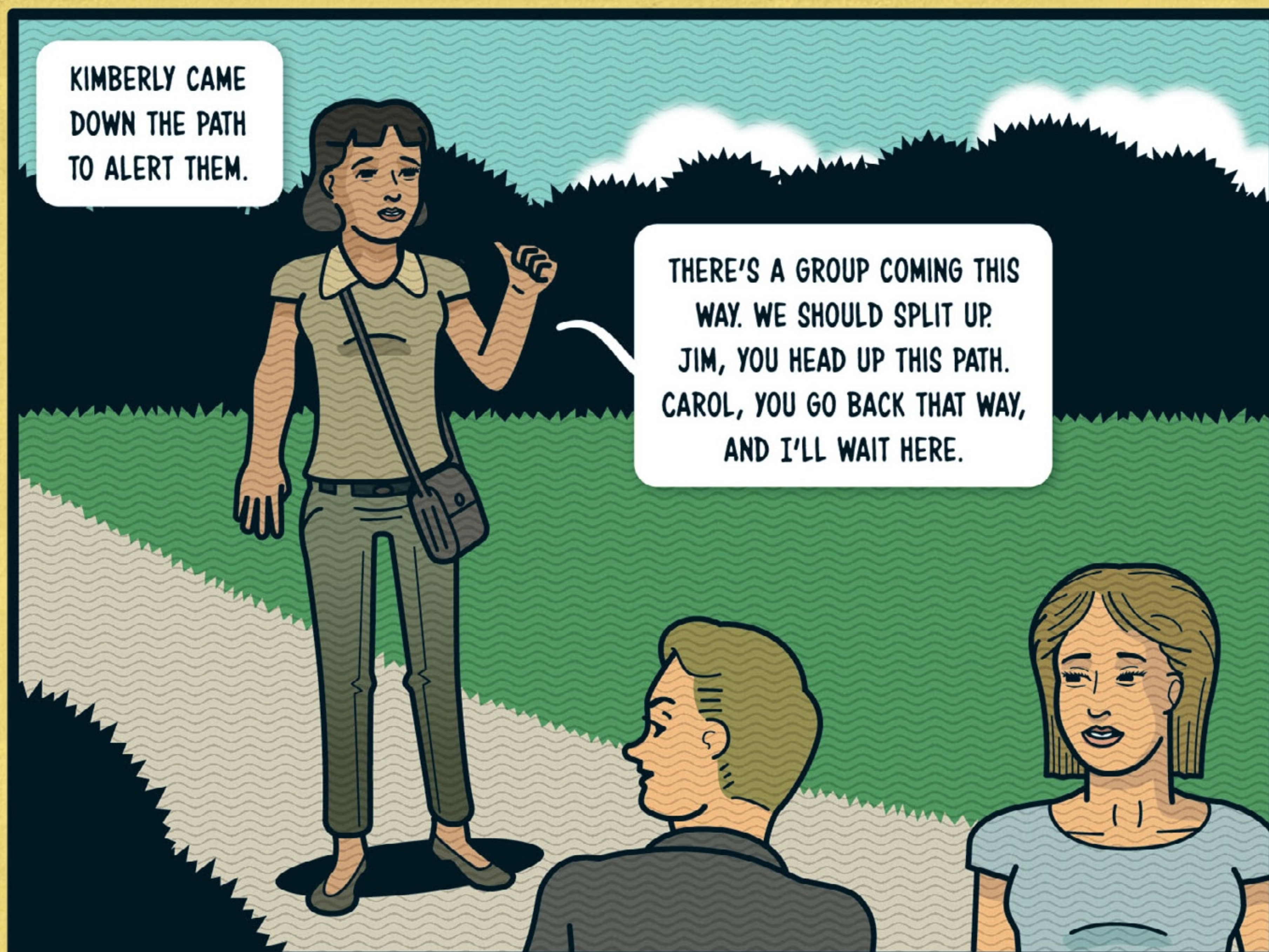
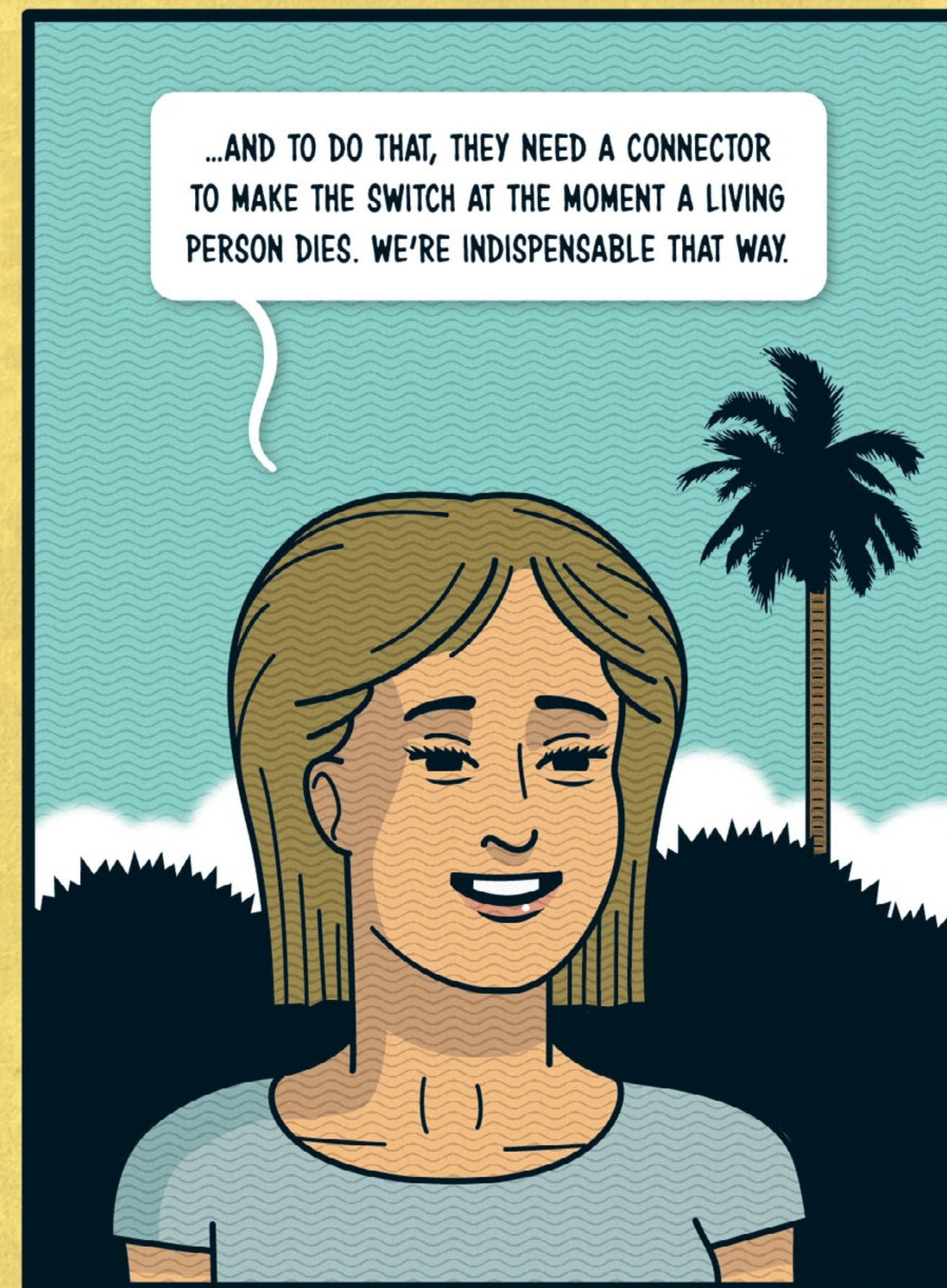
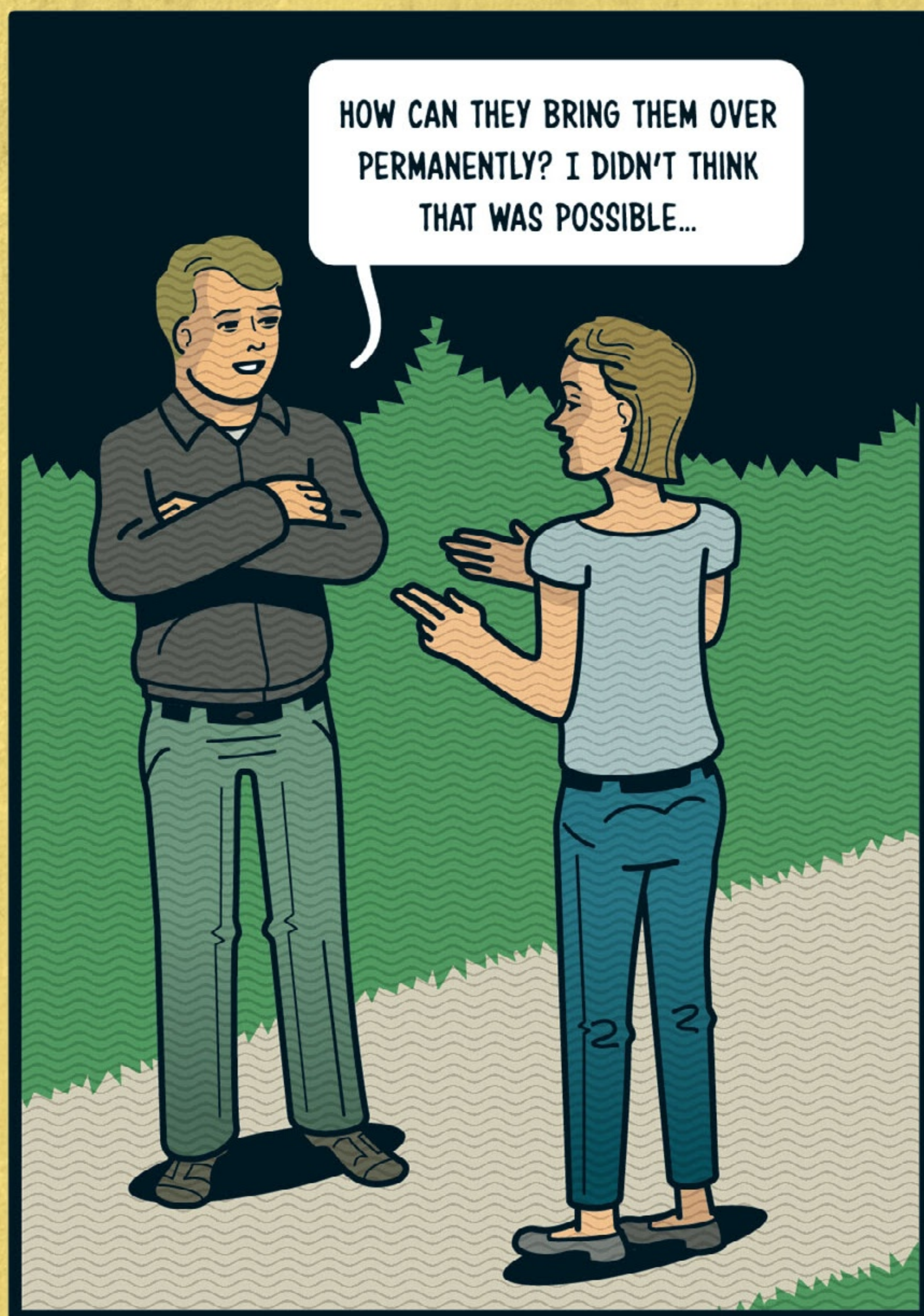


IT'S SAFER
FOR ME IF
SHE STAYS ON
AT C.H.A.R.O.N.,
MY EYES AND
EARS ON THE
INSIDE.



THE PEOPLE WHO
WORK THERE HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT'S
REALLY GOING ON.
THEY TRULY
BELIEVE IT'S
A COMMUNITY
OUTREACH
PROGRAM.

SHE LAUGHED
AT THIS
LAST PART.





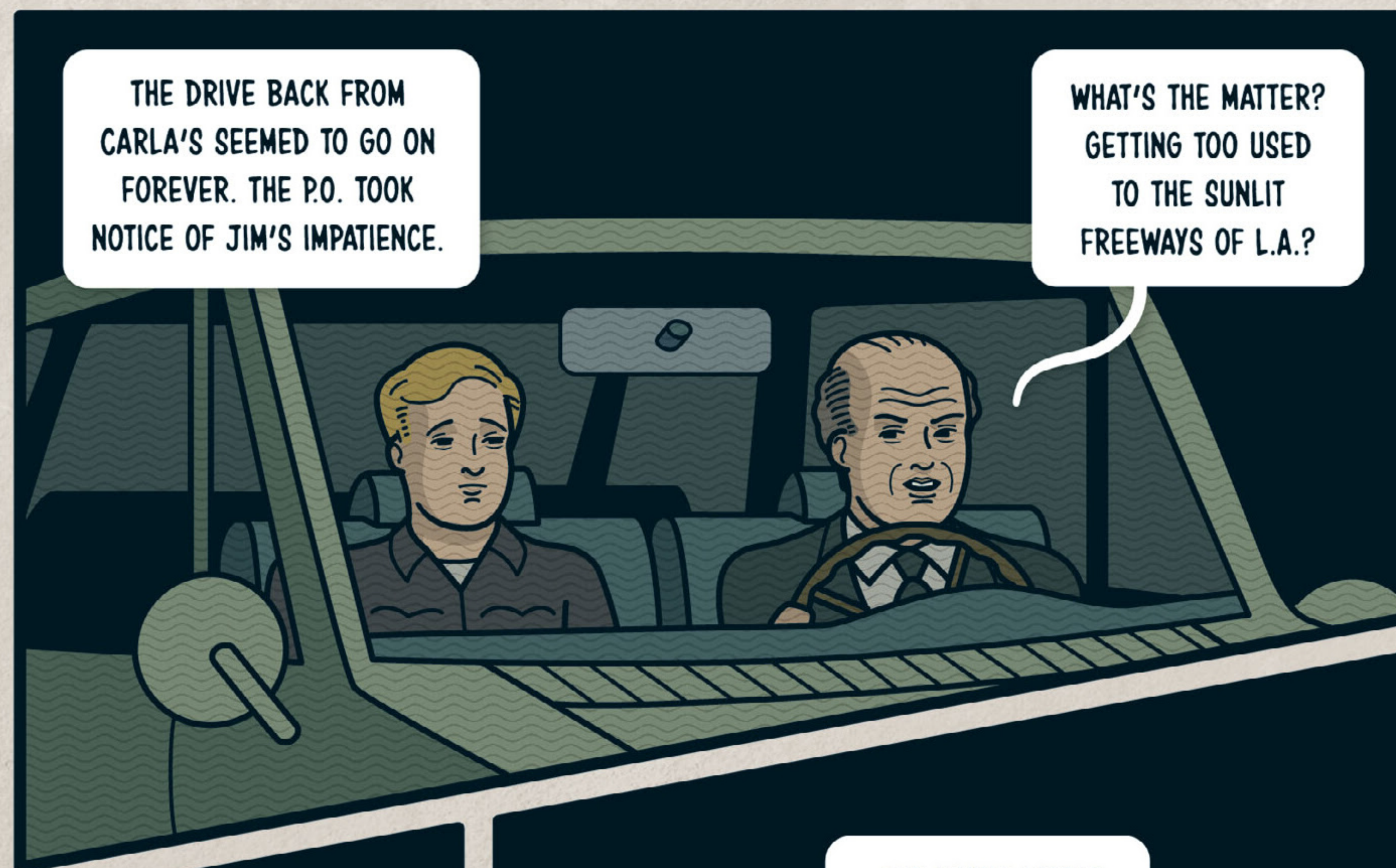
CHAPTER

15



THE DRIVE BACK FROM CARLA'S SEEMED TO GO ON FOREVER. THE P.O. TOOK NOTICE OF JIM'S IMPATIENCE.

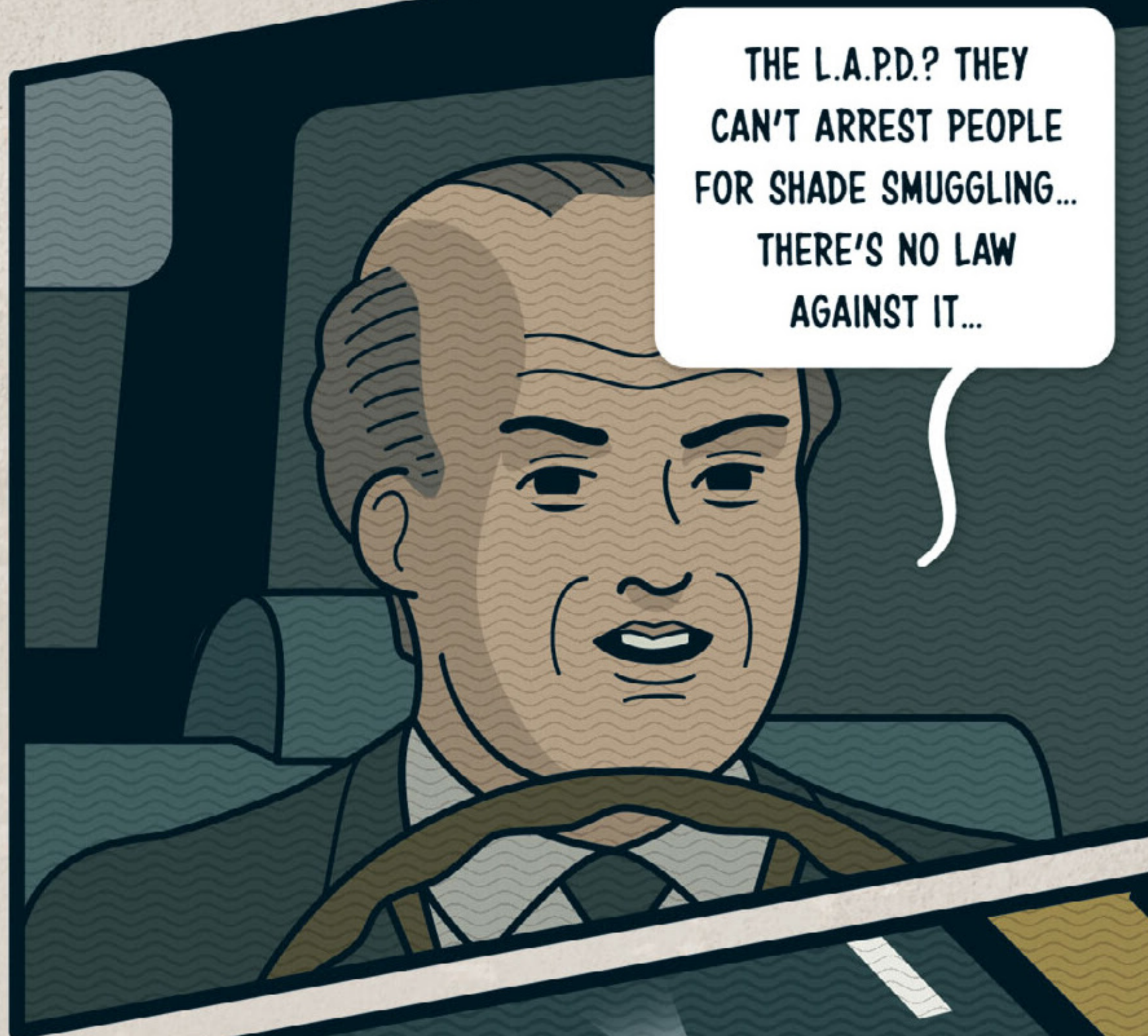
WHAT'S THE MATTER? GETTING TOO USED TO THE SUNLIT FREEWAYS OF L.A.?



EVERY TIME I GO UNDER THE RIVER I WANT IT TO BE THE LAST TIME. WON'T THE L.A.P.D. EVENTUALLY JUST ARREST EVERYONE AND IT WILL ALL BE OVER?



THE L.A.P.D.? THEY CAN'T ARREST PEOPLE FOR SHADE SMUGGLING... THERE'S NO LAW AGAINST IT...

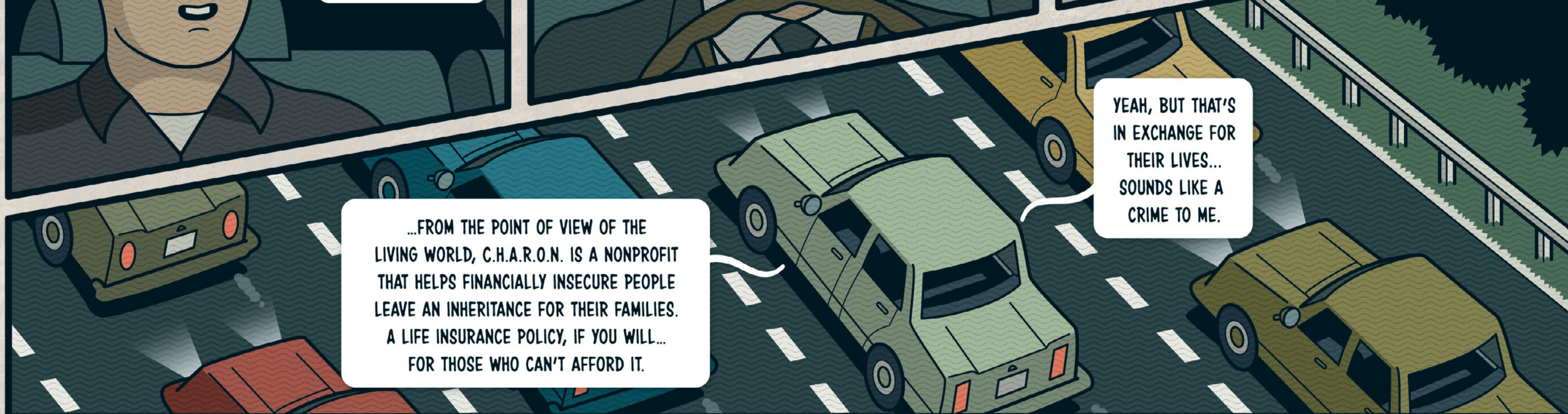


...THE LIVING WORLD DOESN'T RECOGNIZE THAT SHADES EXIST...




YEAH, BUT THAT'S IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR LIVES... SOUNDS LIKE A CRIME TO ME.

...FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE LIVING WORLD, C.H.A.R.O.N. IS A NONPROFIT THAT HELPS FINANCIALLY INSECURE PEOPLE LEAVE AN INHERITANCE FOR THEIR FAMILIES. A LIFE INSURANCE POLICY, IF YOU WILL... FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T AFFORD IT.

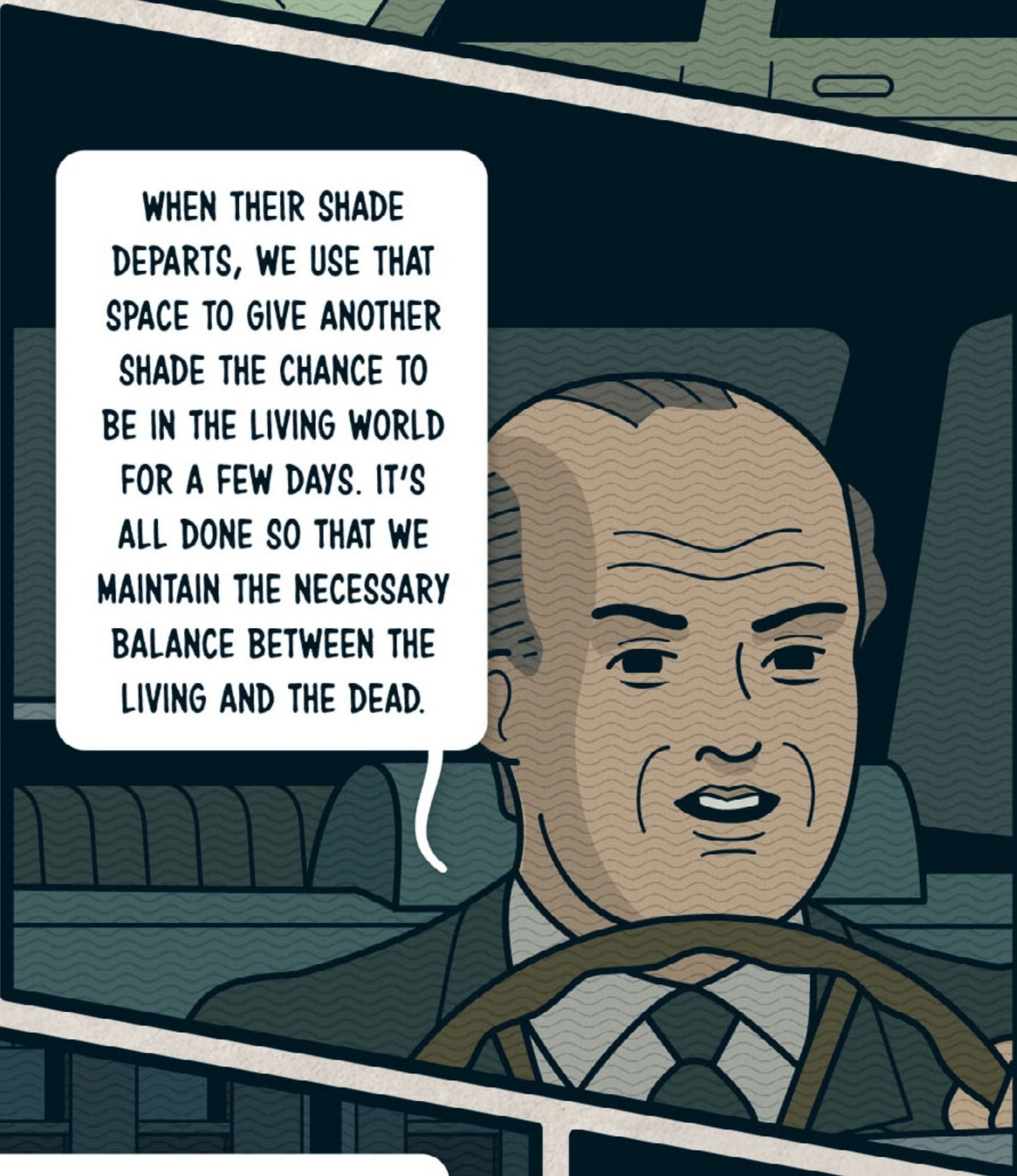




NO, YOU'RE WRONG. WHEN OUR C.H.A.R.O.N. CLIENTS PASS ON, IT'S STRICTLY FROM NATURAL CAUSES.



MOST OF THEM ARE IN POOR HEALTH, WHICH IS WHY THEY SOUGHT OUT C.H.A.R.O.N.'S HELP IN THE FIRST PLACE.

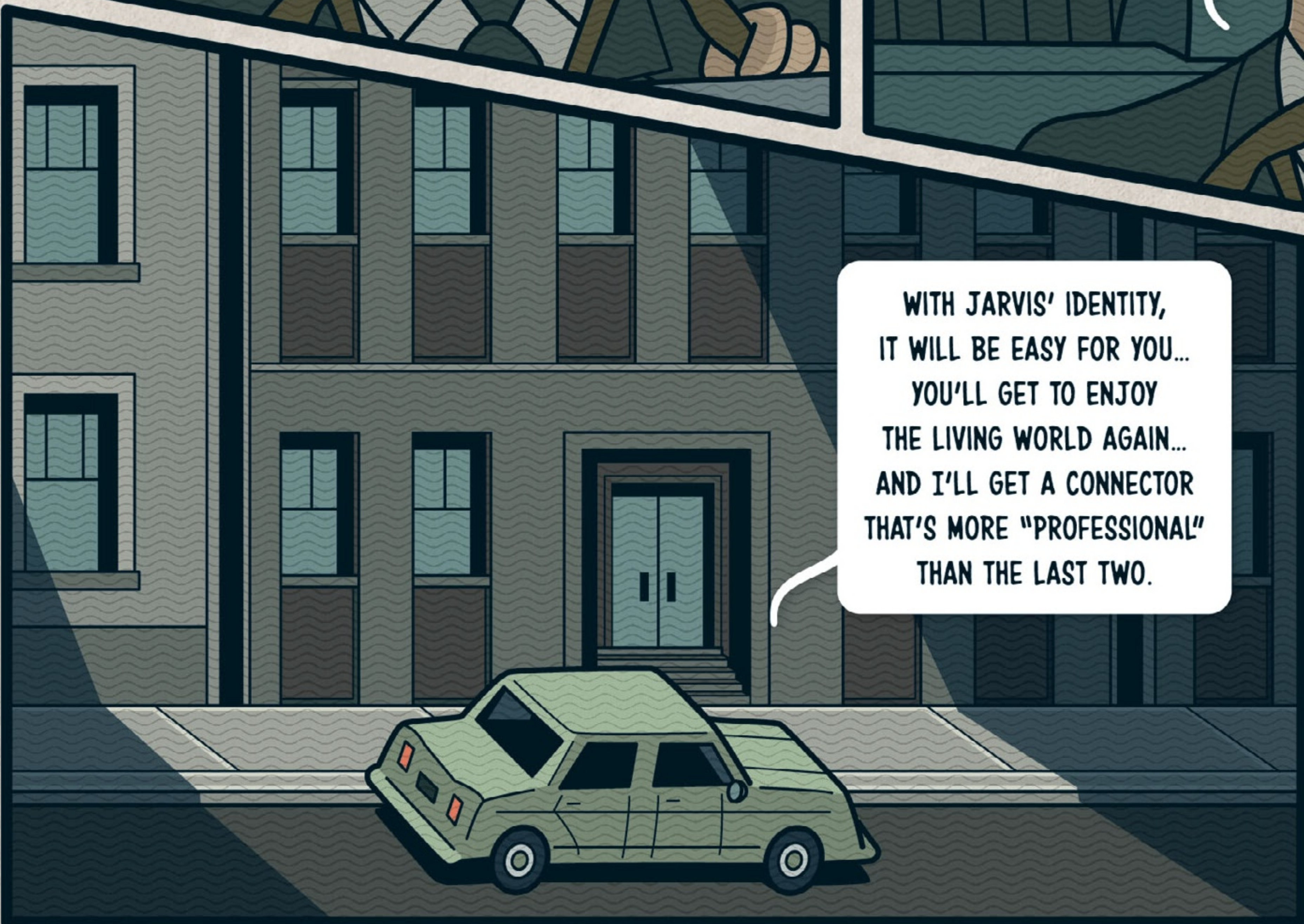


WHEN THEIR SHADE DEPARTS, WE USE THAT SPACE TO GIVE ANOTHER SHADE THE CHANCE TO BE IN THE LIVING WORLD FOR A FEW DAYS. IT'S ALL DONE SO THAT WE MAINTAIN THE NECESSARY BALANCE BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.



SO, WHY GET ME INVOLVED?

I NEED YOU TO BE THE NEW CONNECTOR.



WITH JARVIS' IDENTITY, IT WILL BE EASY FOR YOU... YOU'LL GET TO ENJOY THE LIVING WORLD AGAIN... AND I'LL GET A CONNECTOR THAT'S MORE "PROFESSIONAL" THAN THE LAST TWO.



AND JIM...THE NEXT SÉANCE IS IN TWO DAYS. I'LL PICK YOU UP TUESDAY, AT 5 P.M.

ONCE UPSTAIRS, HE THOUGHT
ABOUT THE CAT BACK AT
JARVIS' APARTMENT.
HE'D LEFT ENOUGH FOOD OUT
TO LAST HER A FEW DAYS.
BUT STILL, THE CAT
STAYED ON HIS MIND.



HE FELT RESTLESS.
HE DECIDED TO WALK OVER
TO THE MOVIE THEATER.
IT WAS OPEN ALL NIGHT.



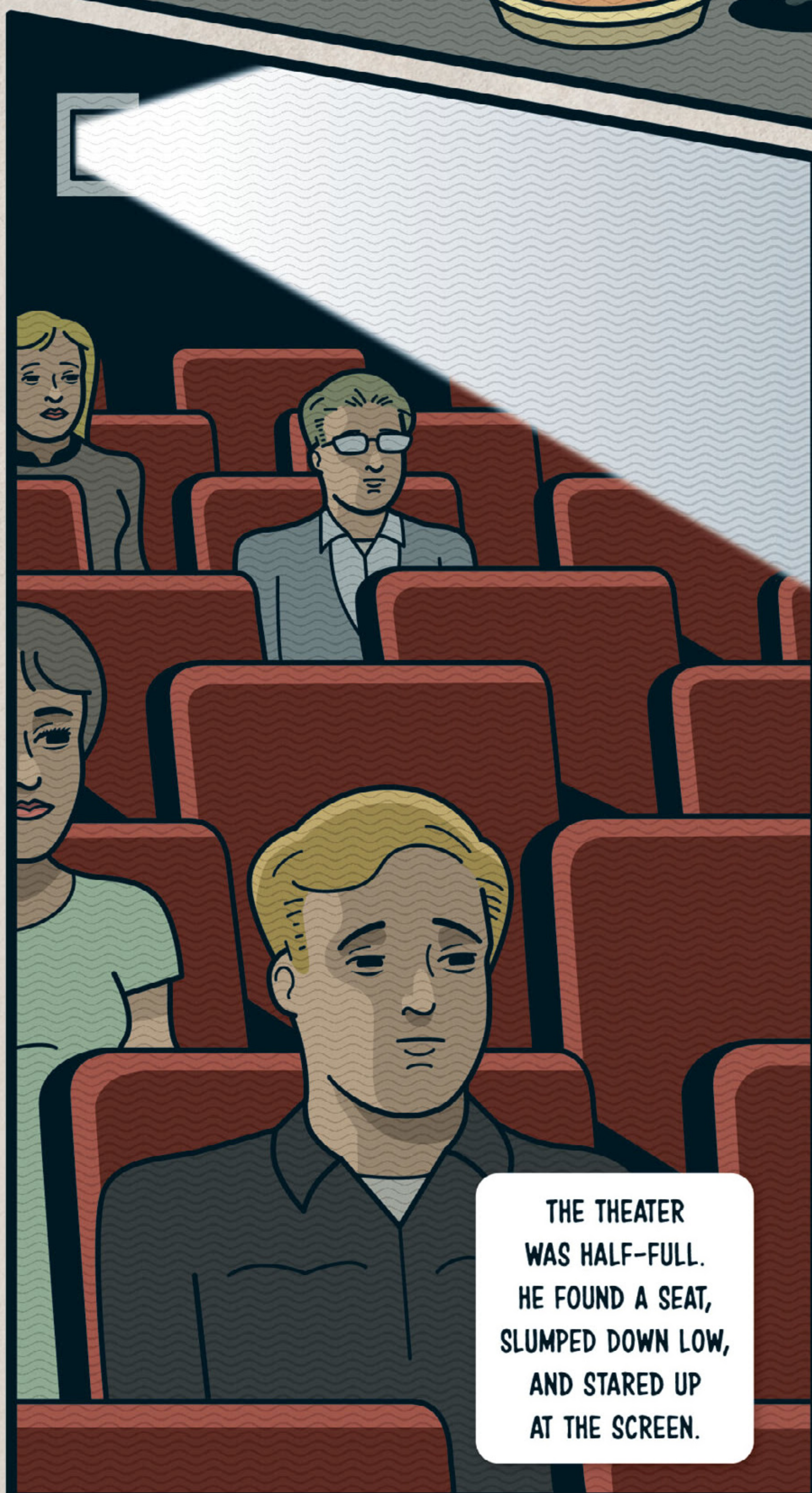
A MELODRAMA.
THE SCENE CUT BETWEEN
TWO FACES:
A MAN AND A WOMAN.
THE WOMAN'S EYES WERE
BRIMMED WITH TEARS.

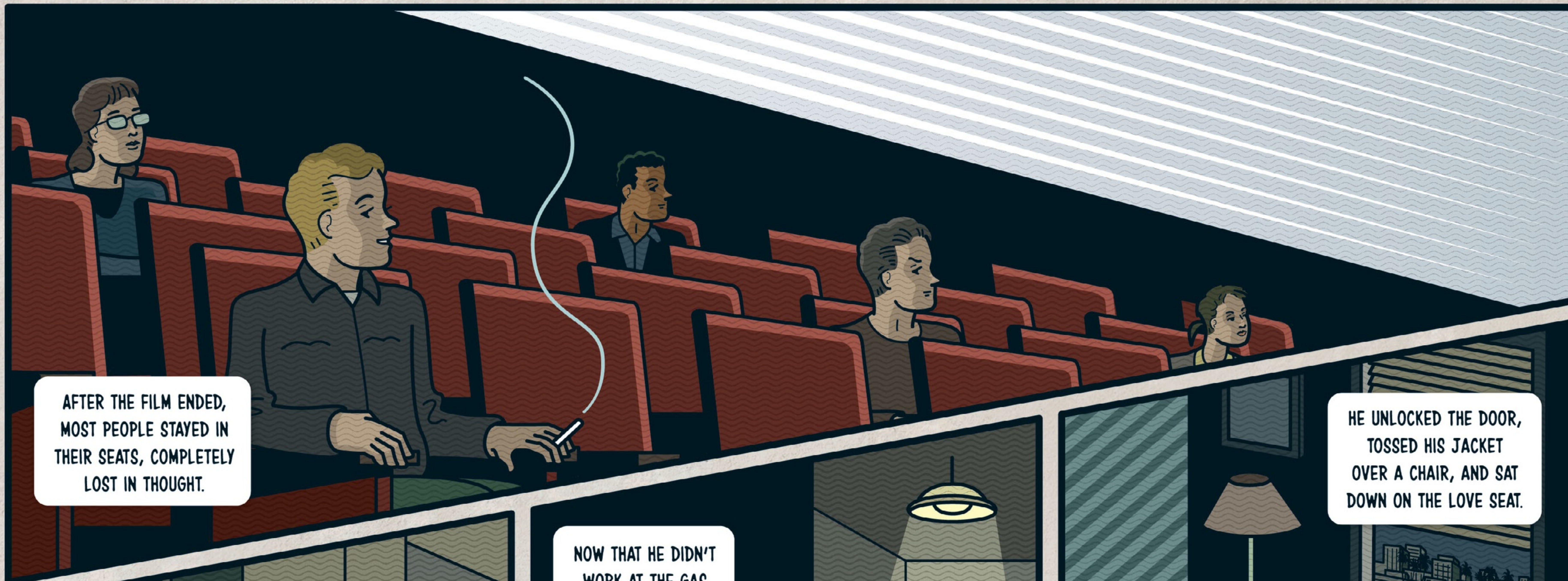


JIM TOOK OUT
THE SILVER COIN
LIEUTENANT BURGESS
HAD GIVEN HIM. HE KNEW
THE P.O. HAD HIM TRAPPED.
MAYBE CAROL HAD THE
RIGHT IDEA:
GO UNDERGROUND
IN THE LIVING WORLD.



THE THEATER
WAS HALF-FULL.
HE FOUND A SEAT,
SLUMPED DOWN LOW,
AND STARED UP
AT THE SCREEN.





AFTER THE FILM ENDED,
MOST PEOPLE STAYED IN
THEIR SEATS, COMPLETELY
LOST IN THOUGHT.



EVENTUALLY, JIM
GOT UP AND
HEADED HOME.



NOW THAT HE DIDN'T
WORK AT THE GAS
STATION ANYMORE,
HE HAD NOWHERE
TO GO.



HE UNLOCKED THE DOOR,
TOSSED HIS JACKET
OVER A CHAIR, AND SAT
DOWN ON THE LOVE SEAT.



NEXT DOOR, SOMEONE
HAD SWITCHED ON A TV.
HE HEARD A VOICE SINGING:
"FOR A THREE-HOUR TOUR...
A THREE-HOUR TOUR..."



THE P.O. PULLED UP
PROMPTLY AT FIVE.
JIM GOT IN.



IN THE BACK SAT A YOUNG MAN
WEARING HEAVY SUNGLASSES.
HE LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW
AS THE CAR PULLED ONTO
THE PASADENA FREEWAY.



THE THREE OF THEM SAT IN SILENCE AS THE P.O.
DROVE. WHEN THEY TURNED ONTO A RESIDENTIAL
BLOCK, THE MAN IN THE BACK SEAT SPOKE UP...



IS THIS
HER STREET?



YES.
WE'RE HERE.



THE MAN STOOD
ON THE DRIVEWAY
AS THE P.O. RAPPED
AT THE DOOR.



HE TOOK HIS
SUNGLASSES OFF
AND PUT THEM IN
HIS BREAST POCKET.
HE'D BEEN A FAMOUS
MARTIAL ARTS
FILM STAR...
WHEN HE
WAS ALIVE.



THE DOOR OPENED,
AND CARLA
USHERED THEM IN.



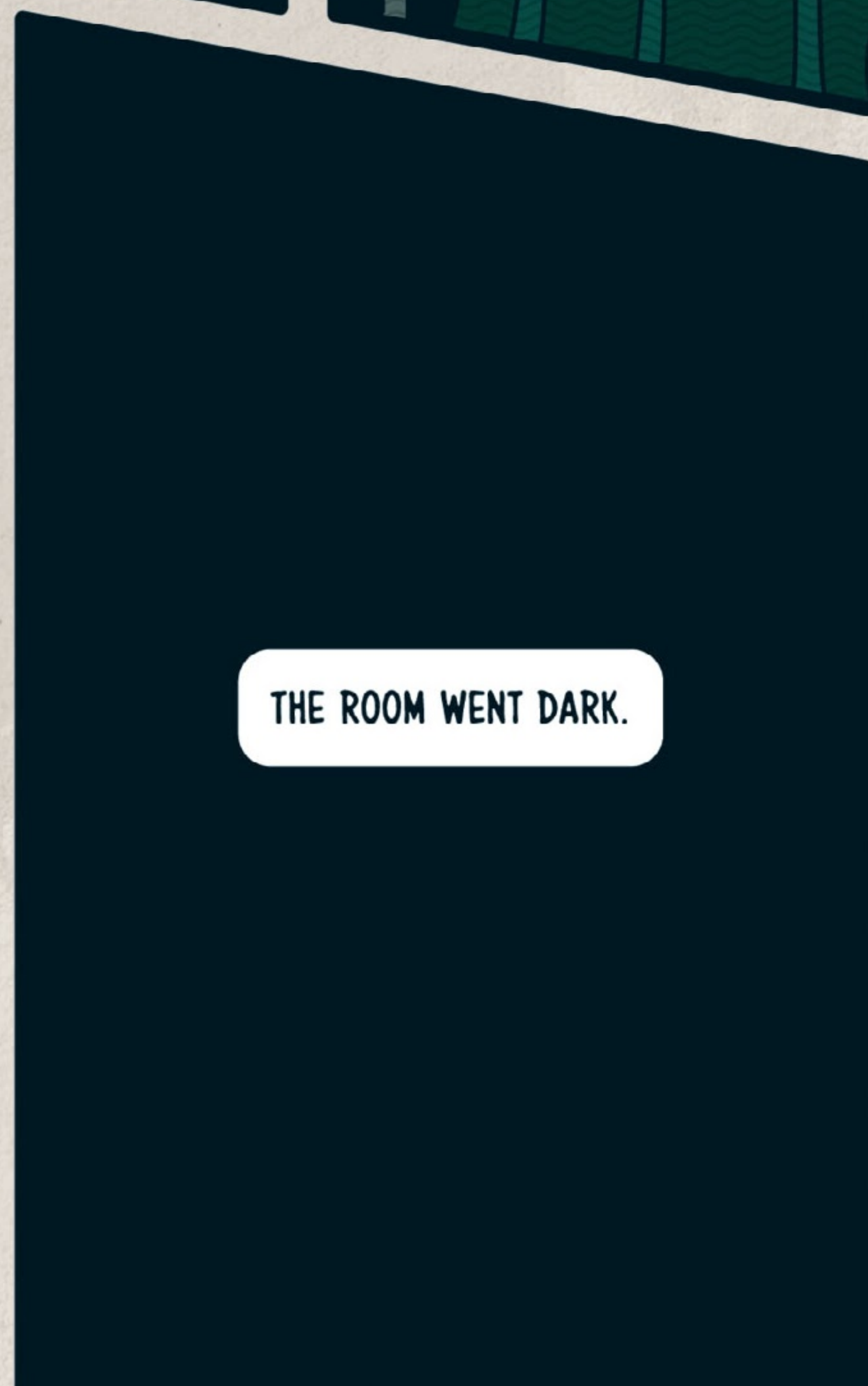
OUR SPECIAL GUEST
WILL SIT HERE,
ON MY LEFT,
AND JIM,
YOU'LL TAKE
THE OTHER SEAT.



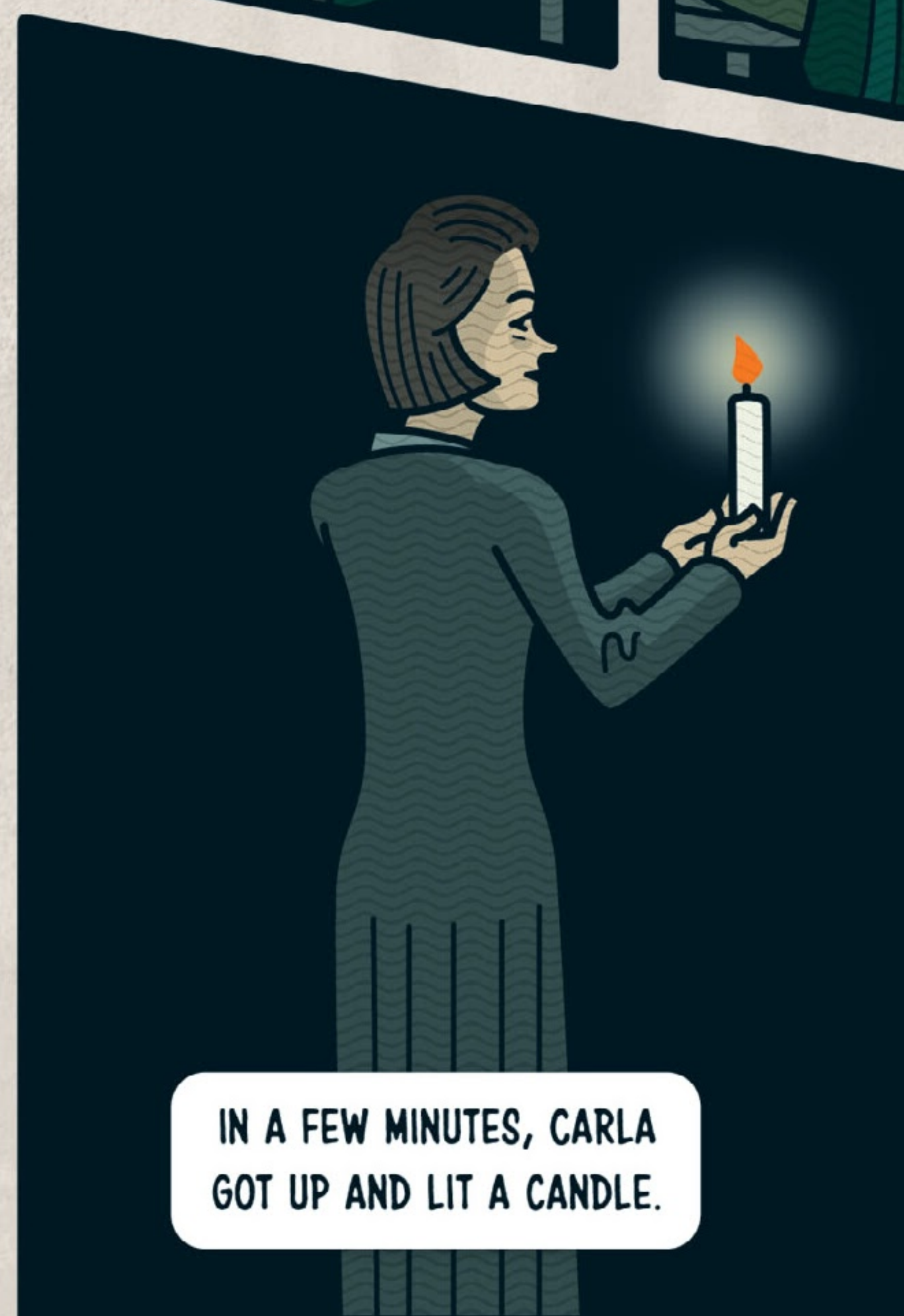
THE FOUR OF THEM
JOINED HANDS AS CARLA
BOWED HER HEAD AND
BEGAN SOFTLY CHANTING.
THE CRYSTAL BALL
BEGAN TO PULSE AS HER
VOICE ROSE AND FELL.



SLOWLY, HER HEAD LIFTED UP.
HER EYES WERE ROLLED BACK
SO THAT ONLY THE
WHITES SHOWED.



THE ROOM WENT DARK.



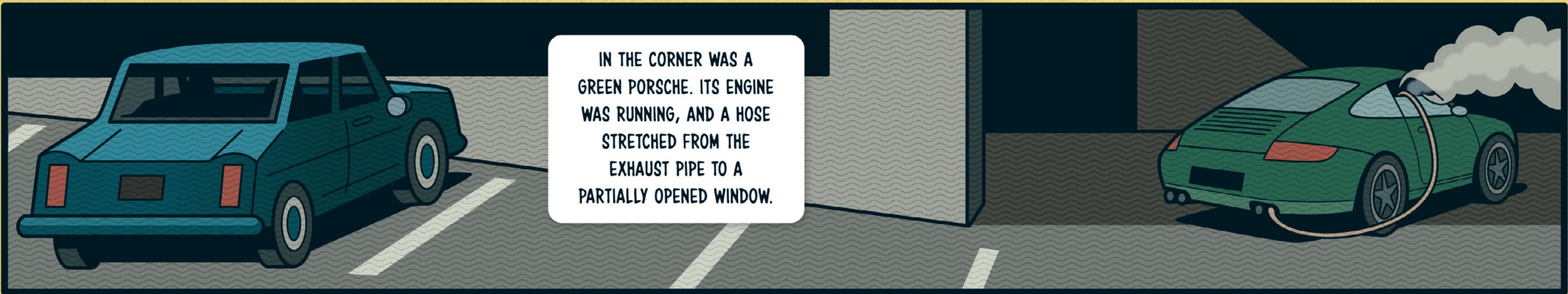
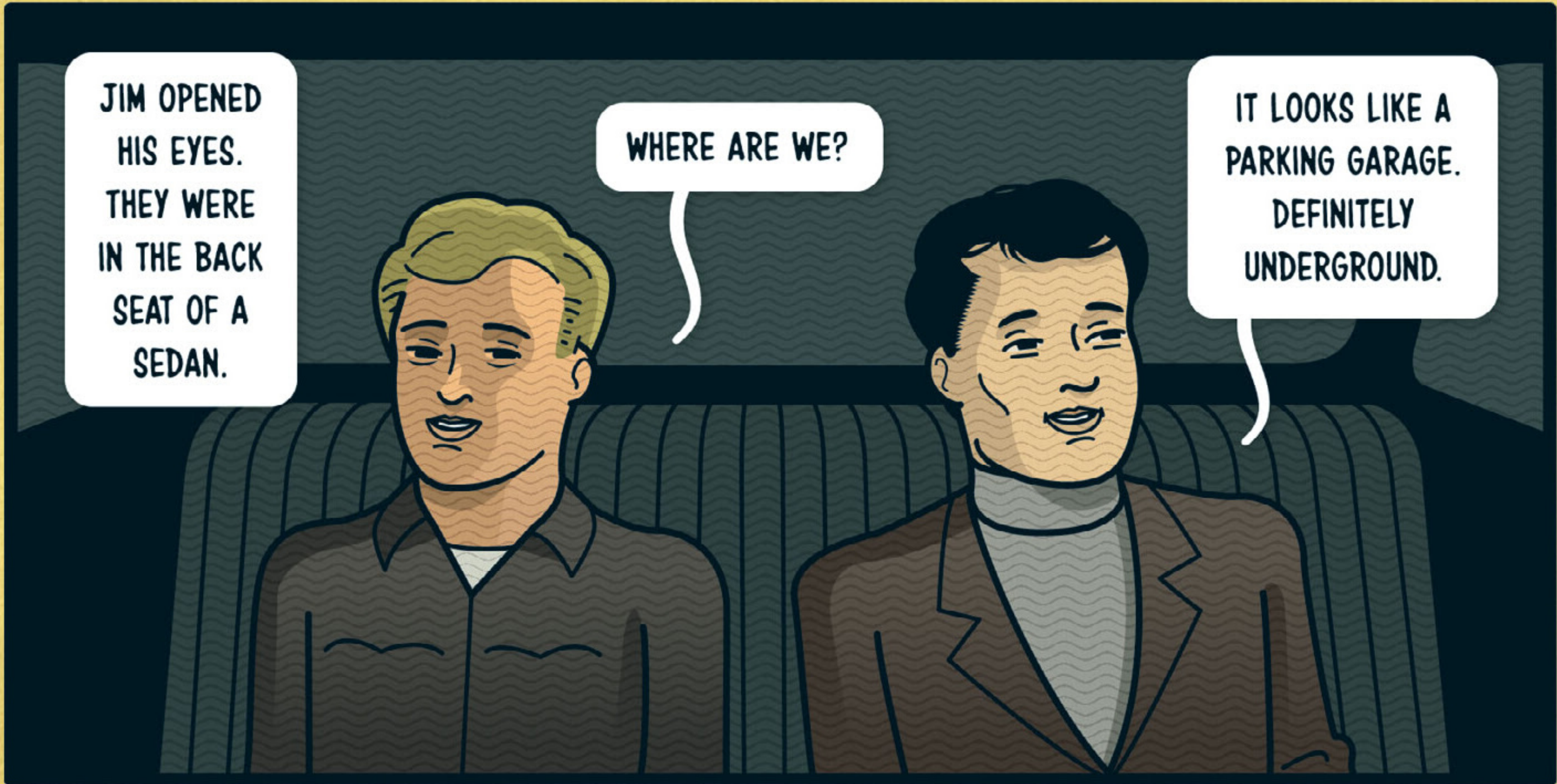
IN A FEW MINUTES, CARLA
GOT UP AND LIT A CANDLE.

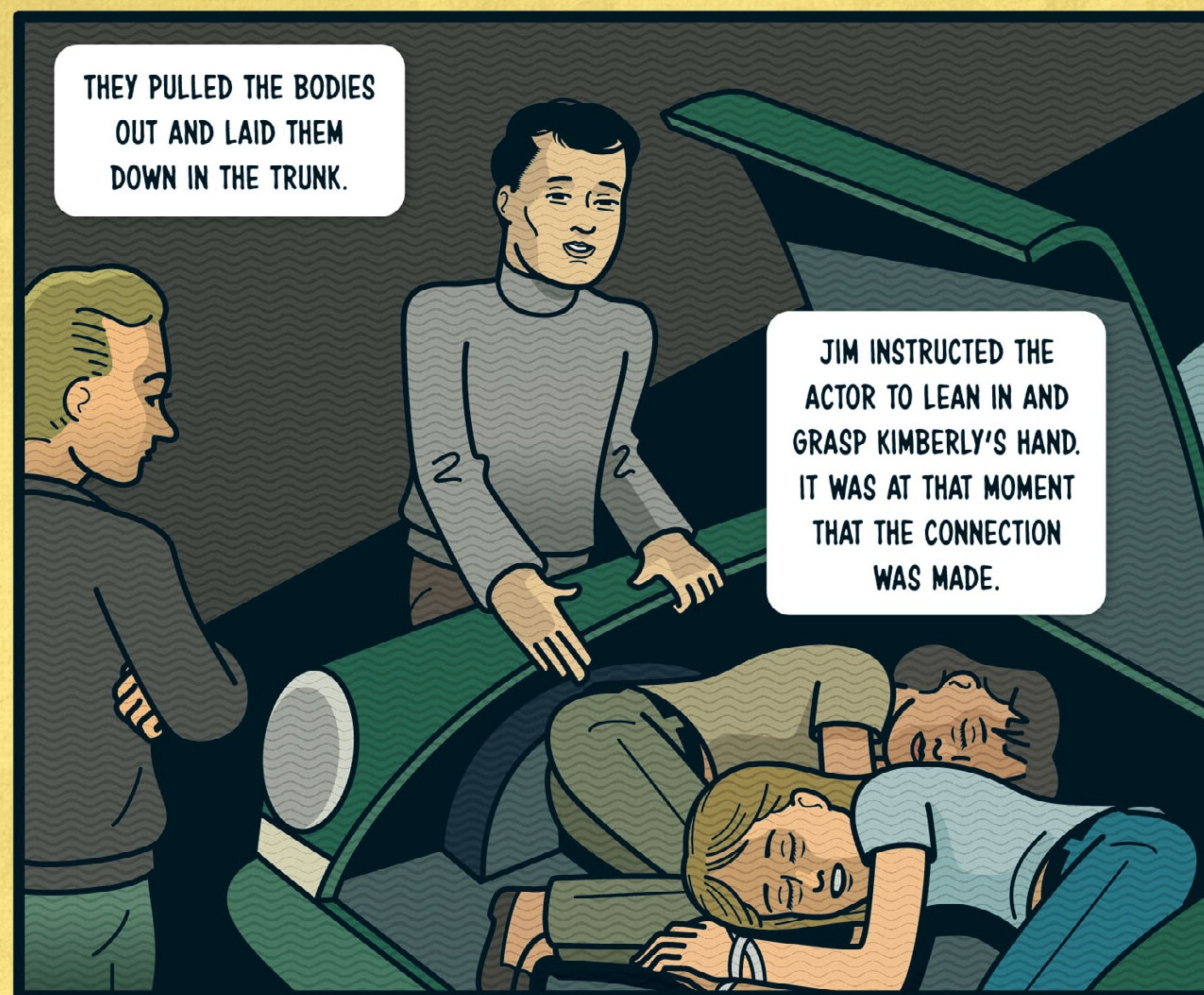
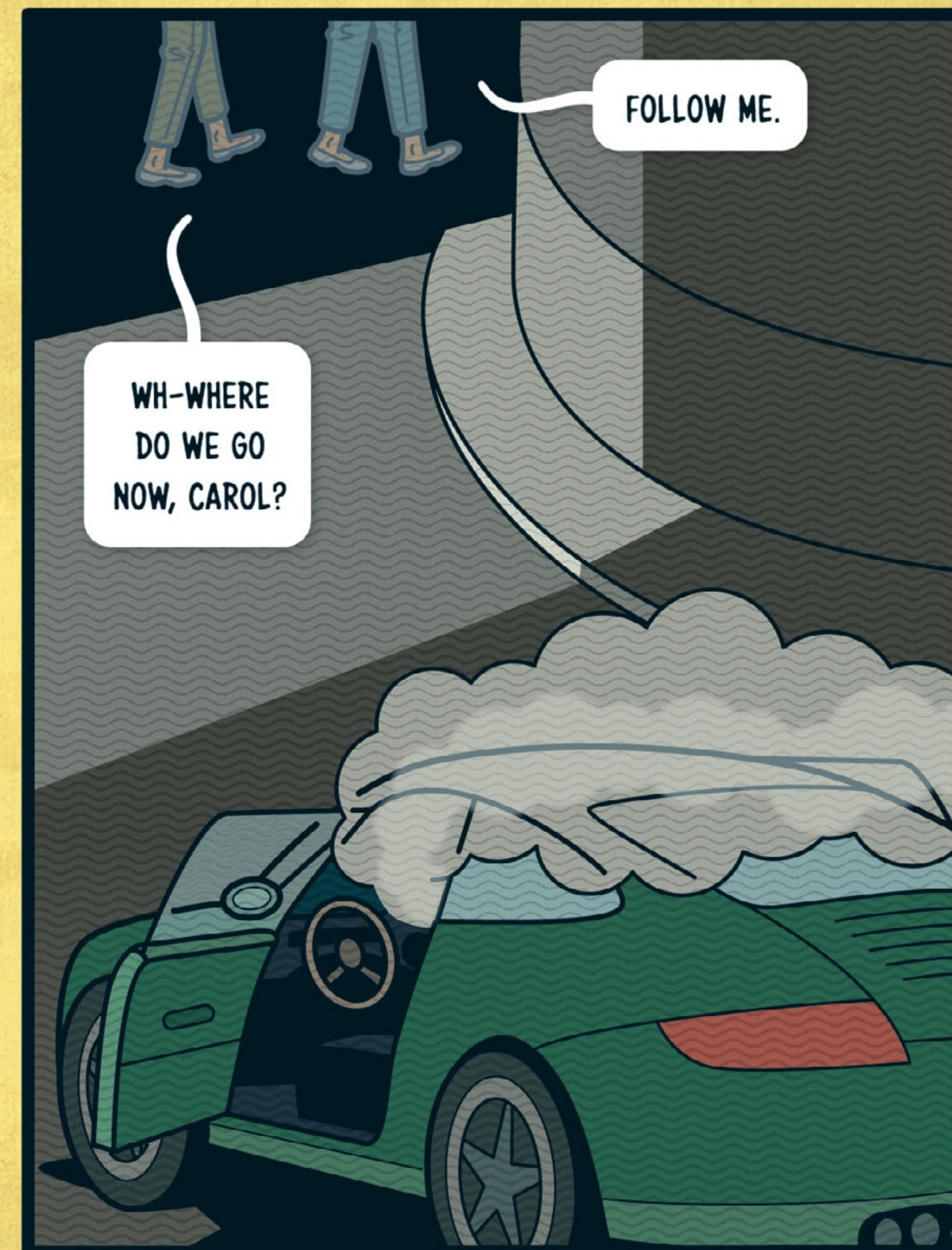
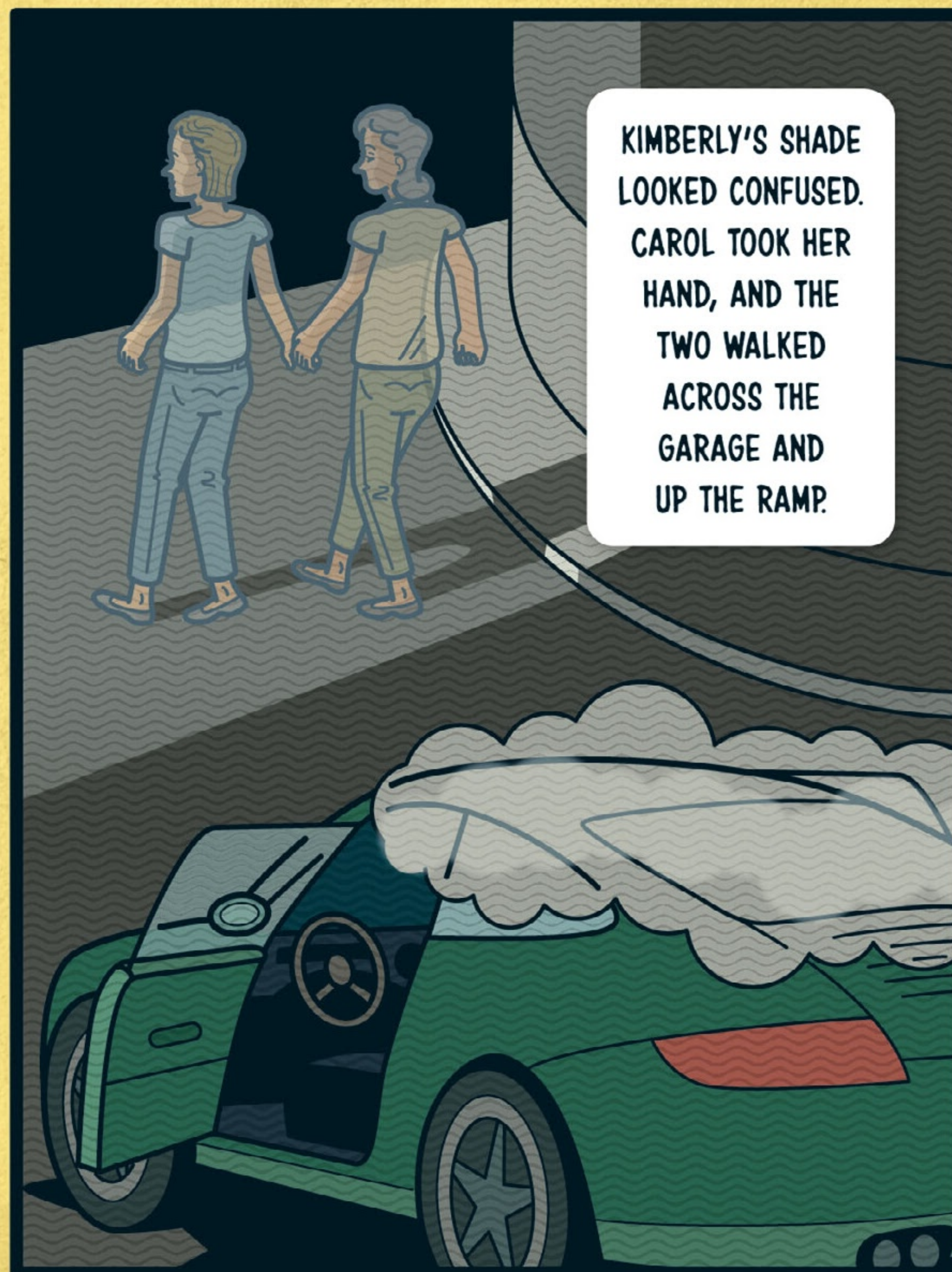


SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE
LEFT IN THE ROOM.

FOREVER CALIFORNIA AND EVER

CHAPTR-16



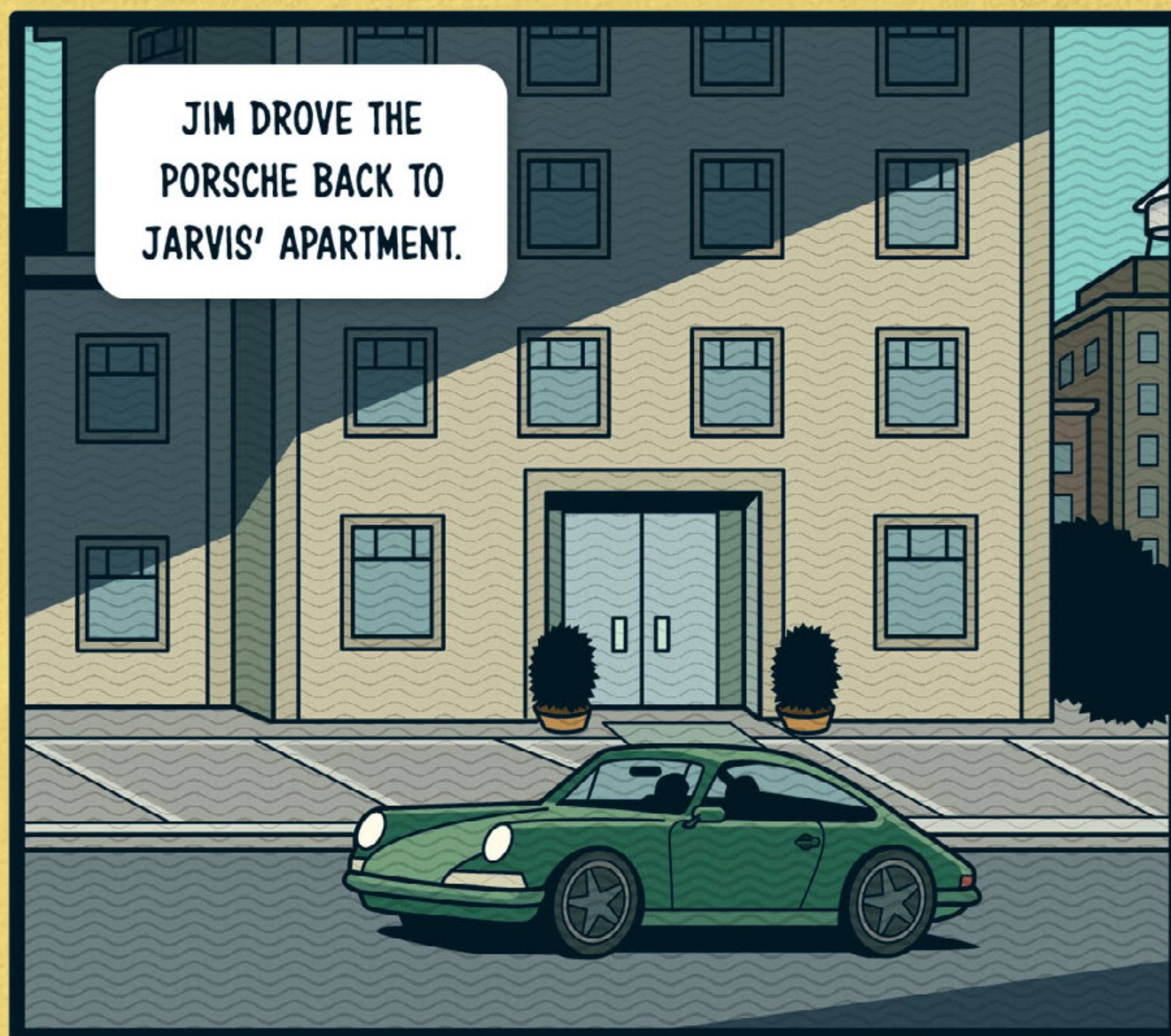




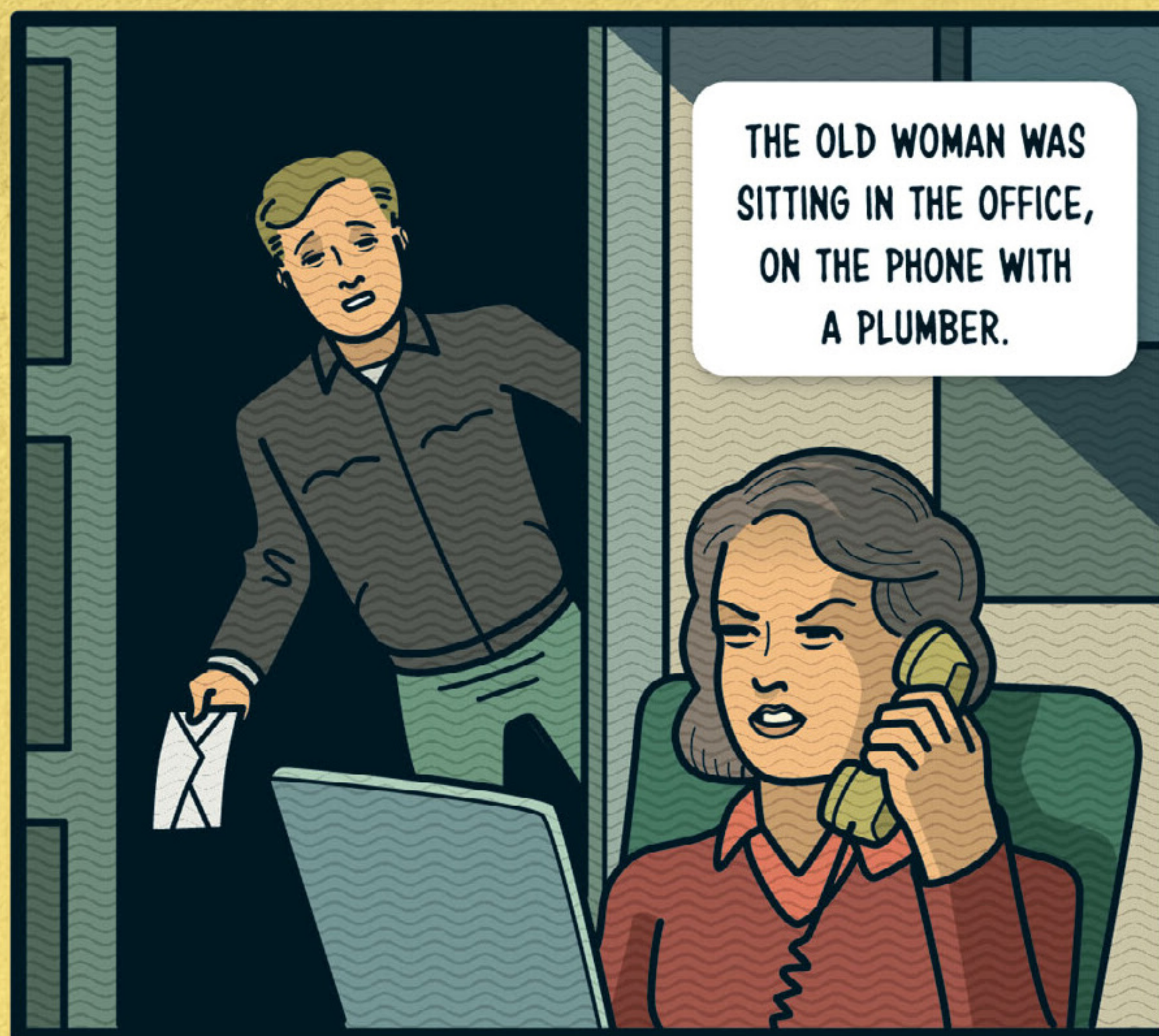
TWENTY MINUTES LATER, THEY PULLED UP IN FRONT OF THE RESTAURANT.



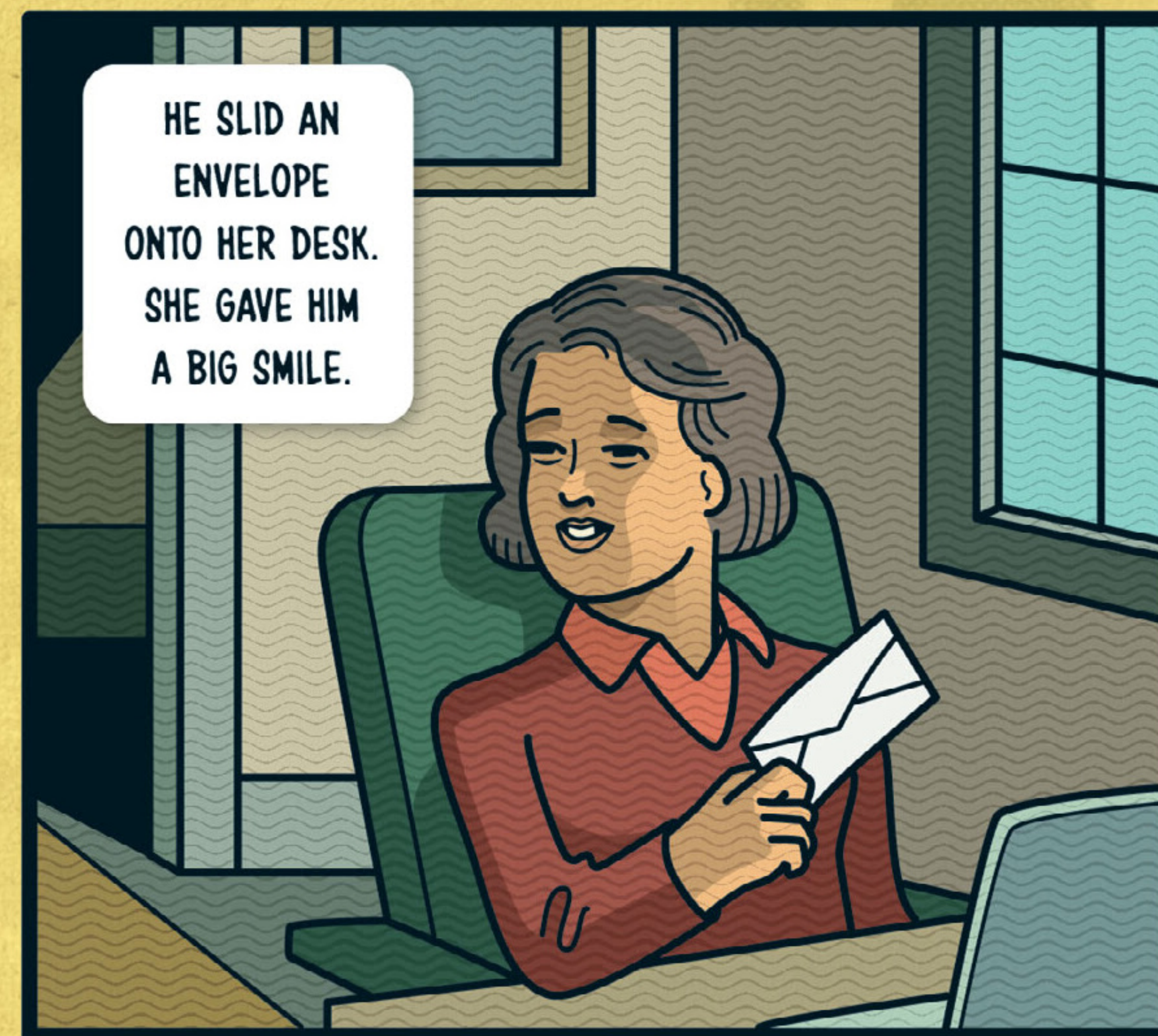
A MAN RAN OVER TO OPEN THE PASSENGER DOOR.



JIM DROVE THE PORSCHE BACK TO JARVIS' APARTMENT.



THE OLD WOMAN WAS SITTING IN THE OFFICE, ON THE PHONE WITH A PLUMBER.



HE SLID AN ENVELOPE ONTO HER DESK. SHE GAVE HIM A BIG SMILE.



WHEN HE OPENED JARVIS' DOOR, HE FELT ALMOST HAPPY TO BE THERE.



I'LL BET YOU'RE HUNGRY, HUH?



FROM AROUND THE CORNER, THE CAT SLINKED INTO THE ROOM.



THE P.O. STOOD UP
AND WALKED OUT
FROM BEHIND
A DUMPSTER.

A FEW FEET AWAY
WAS A BODY,
HALF WRAPPED IN
A SLEEPING BAG,
WITH A SYRINGE
STILL IN THE ARM.

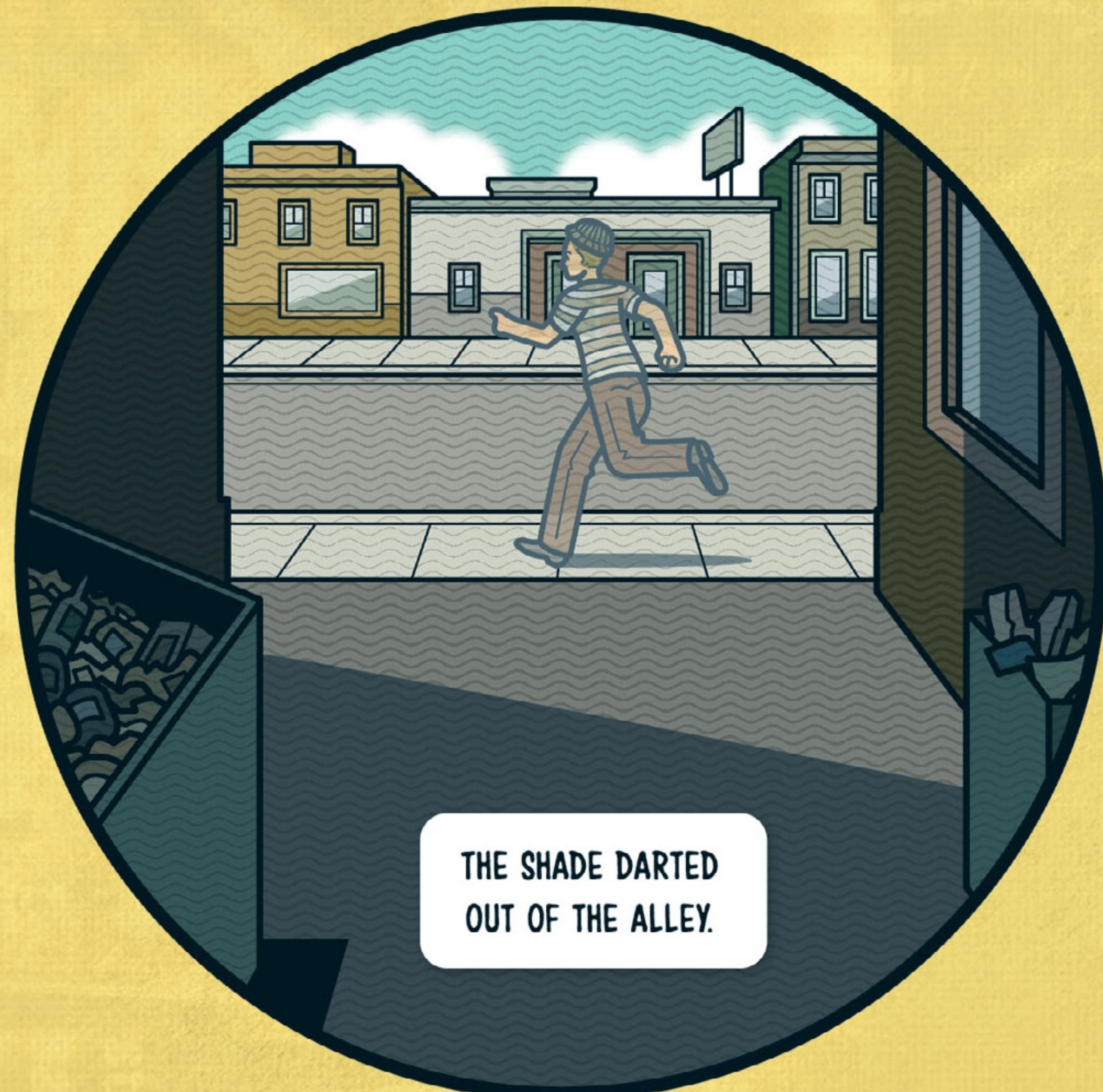
THE SHADE
COVERED
IN THE
DOORWAY,
LOOKING
UNSURE
AND SCARED.



DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE NOT A VAMPIRE.
THE SUN ISN'T GOING TO KILL YOU...
YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.



TAKE A GOOD LOOK
AT THE SKY. IT'S THE
LAST TIME YOU'LL
SEE A BLUE ONE.



THE SHADE DARTED
OUT OF THE ALLEY.

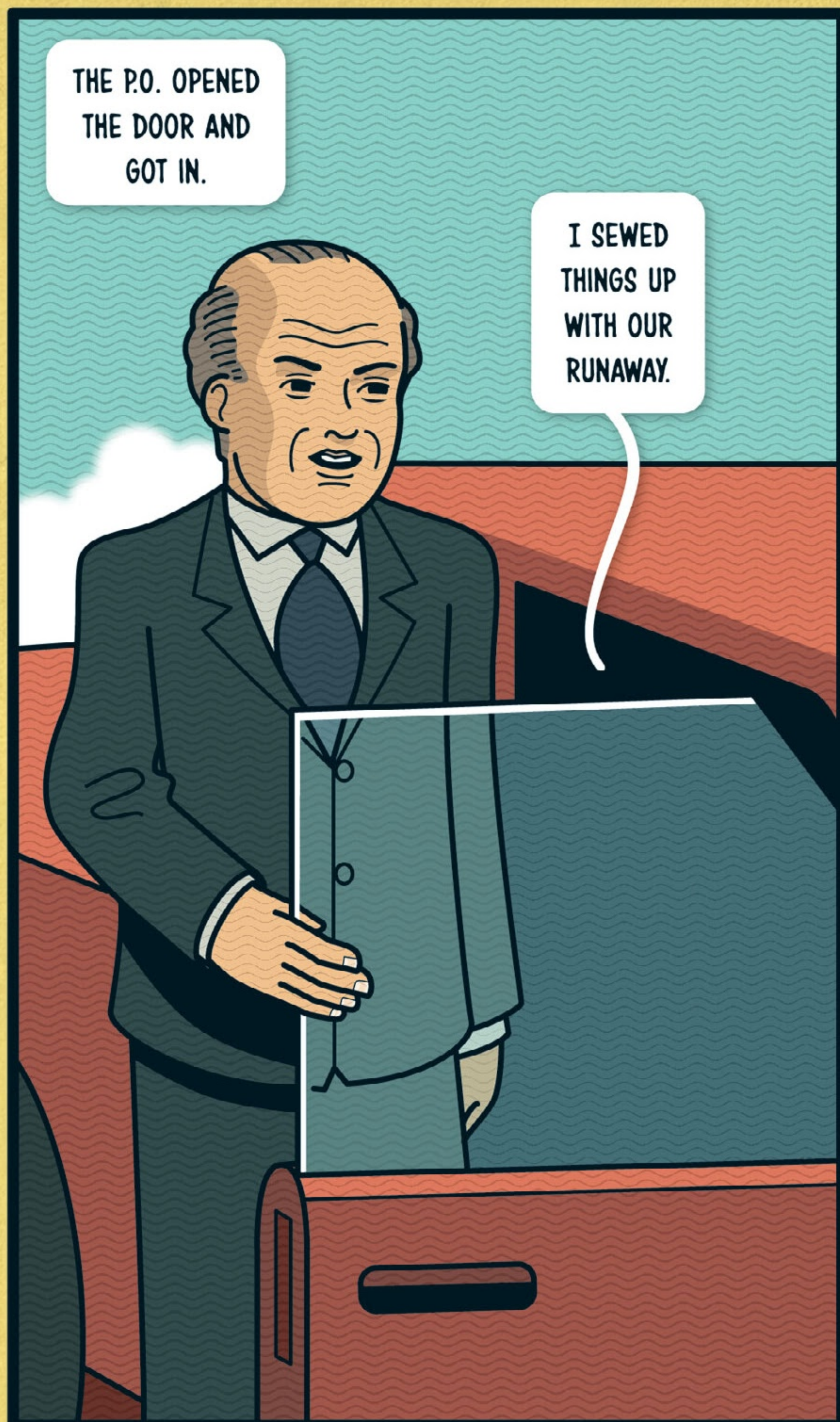
THE P.O. ALSO HEADED OUT
OF THE ALLEY AND ONTO
HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD.



FROM THERE, HE SAW
THE SIGN FOR THE
RESTAURANT. AND OUT
IN FRONT, BURGESS
WAS WAITING FOR HIM.

THE P.O. OPENED
THE DOOR AND
GOT IN.

I SEWED
THINGS UP
WITH OUR
RUNAWAY.

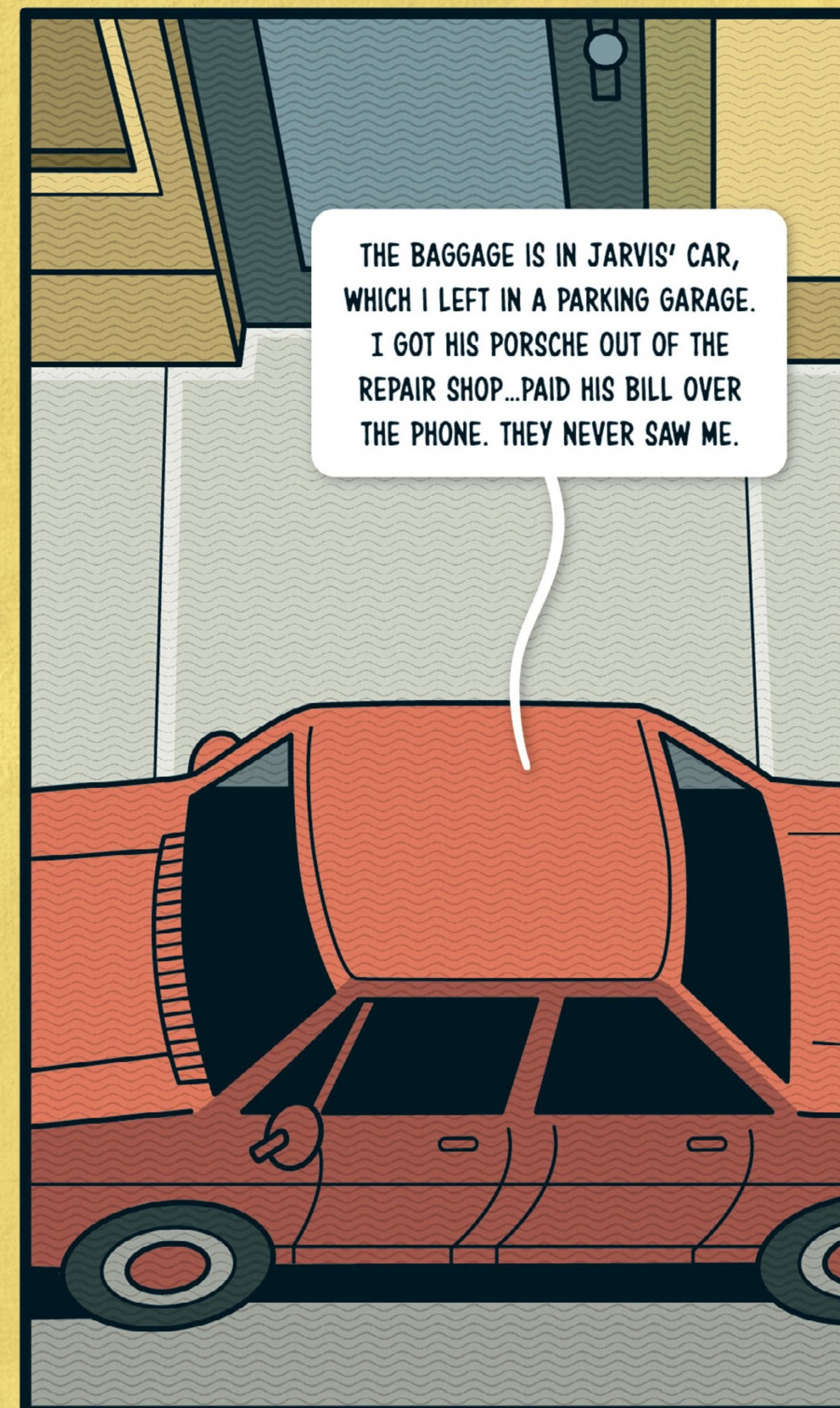


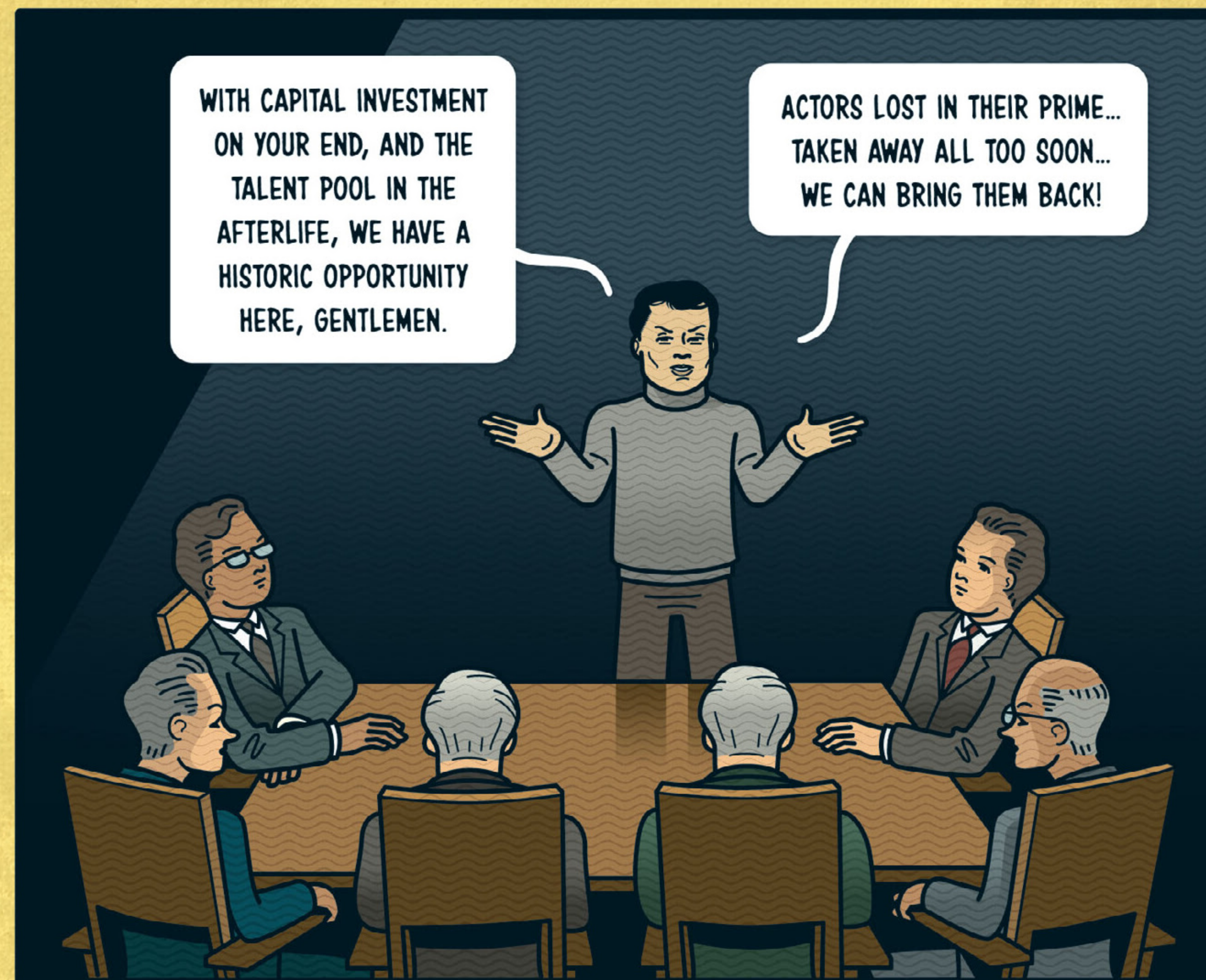
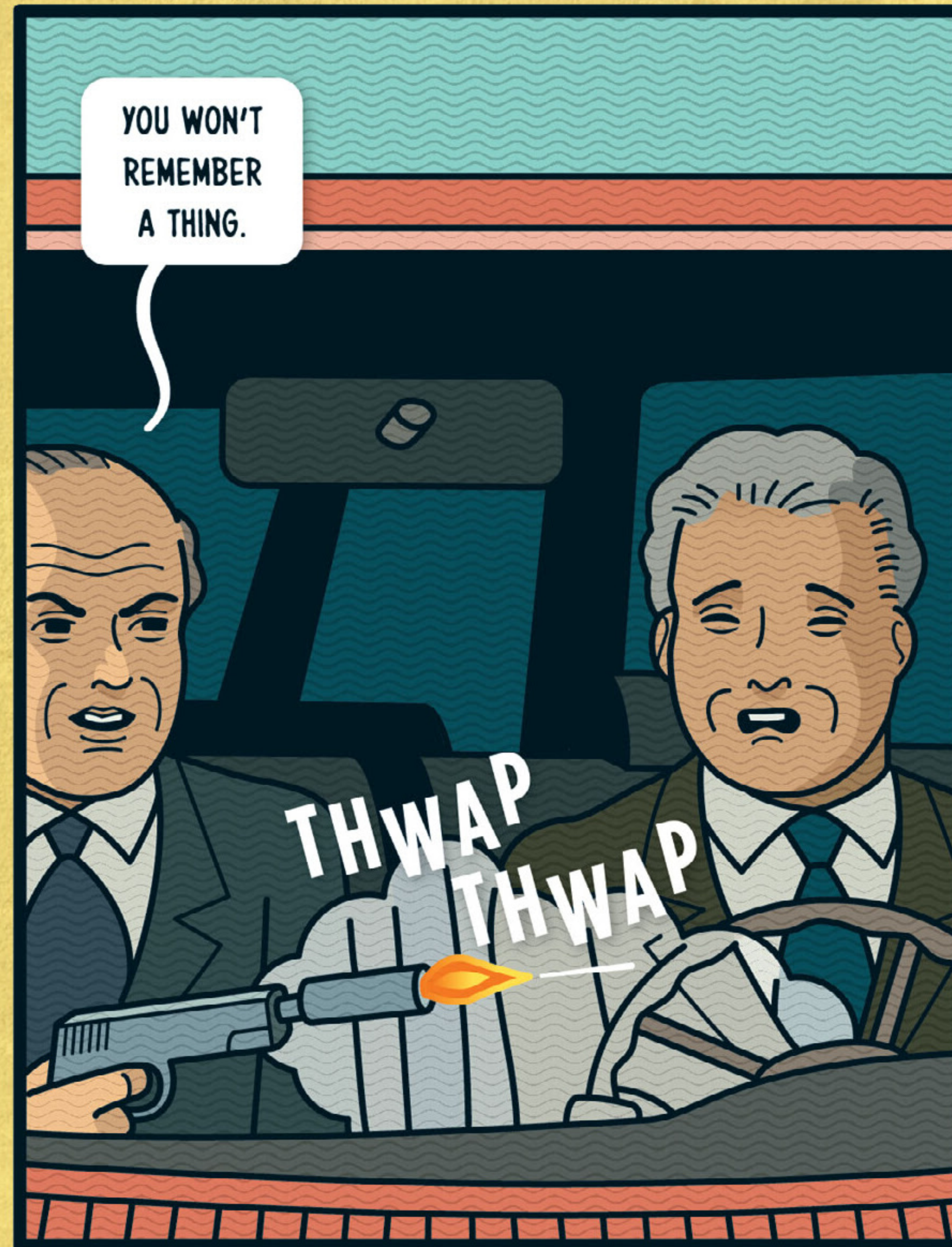
SHE HAD A PARTNER IN THE
C.H.A.R.O.N. FIELD OFFICE.
THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO HARD
TO FIND HER.

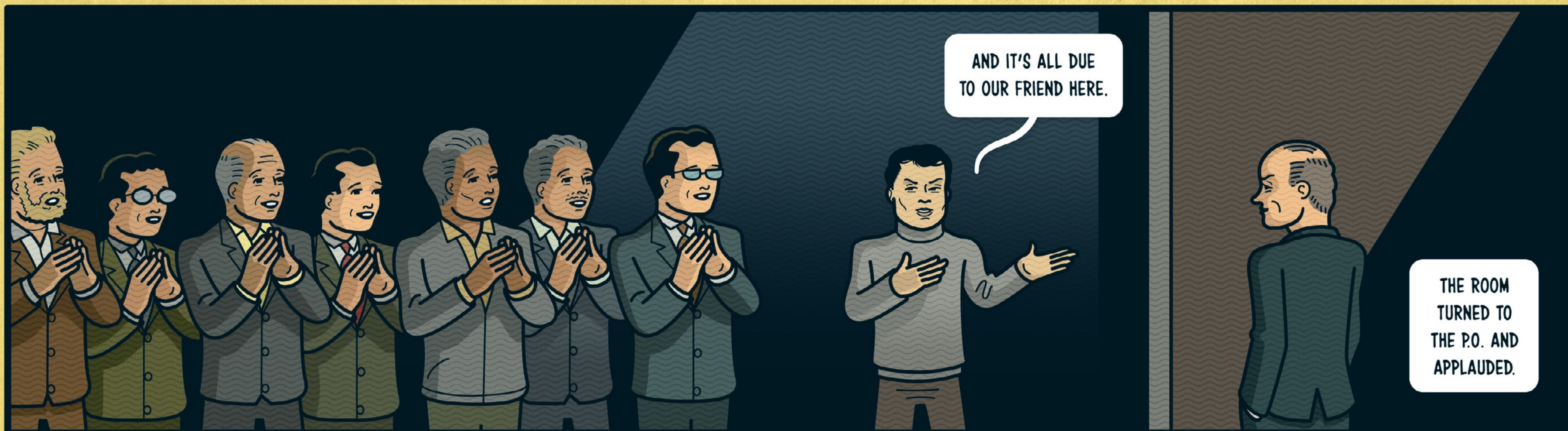
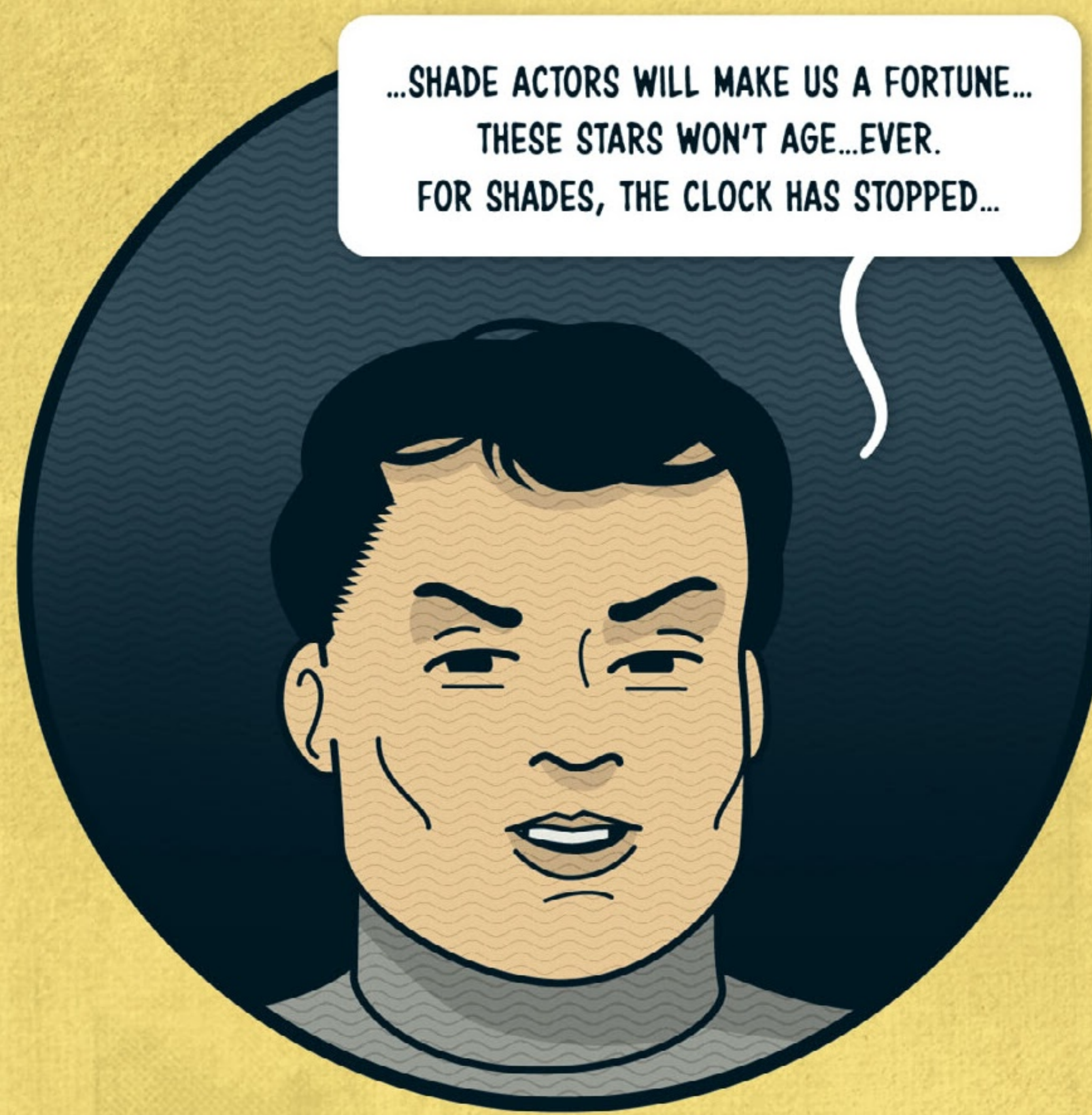
SO, SHE HAD INSIDE EYES ON US...
BUT NOW THOSE EYES ARE CLOSED.
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE BAGGAGE?



THE BAGGAGE IS IN JARVIS' CAR,
WHICH I LEFT IN A PARKING GARAGE.
I GOT HIS PORSCHE OUT OF THE
REPAIR SHOP...PAID HIS BILL OVER
THE PHONE. THEY NEVER SAW ME.









EVERYTHING OUR FRIEND
SAID IS TRUE.



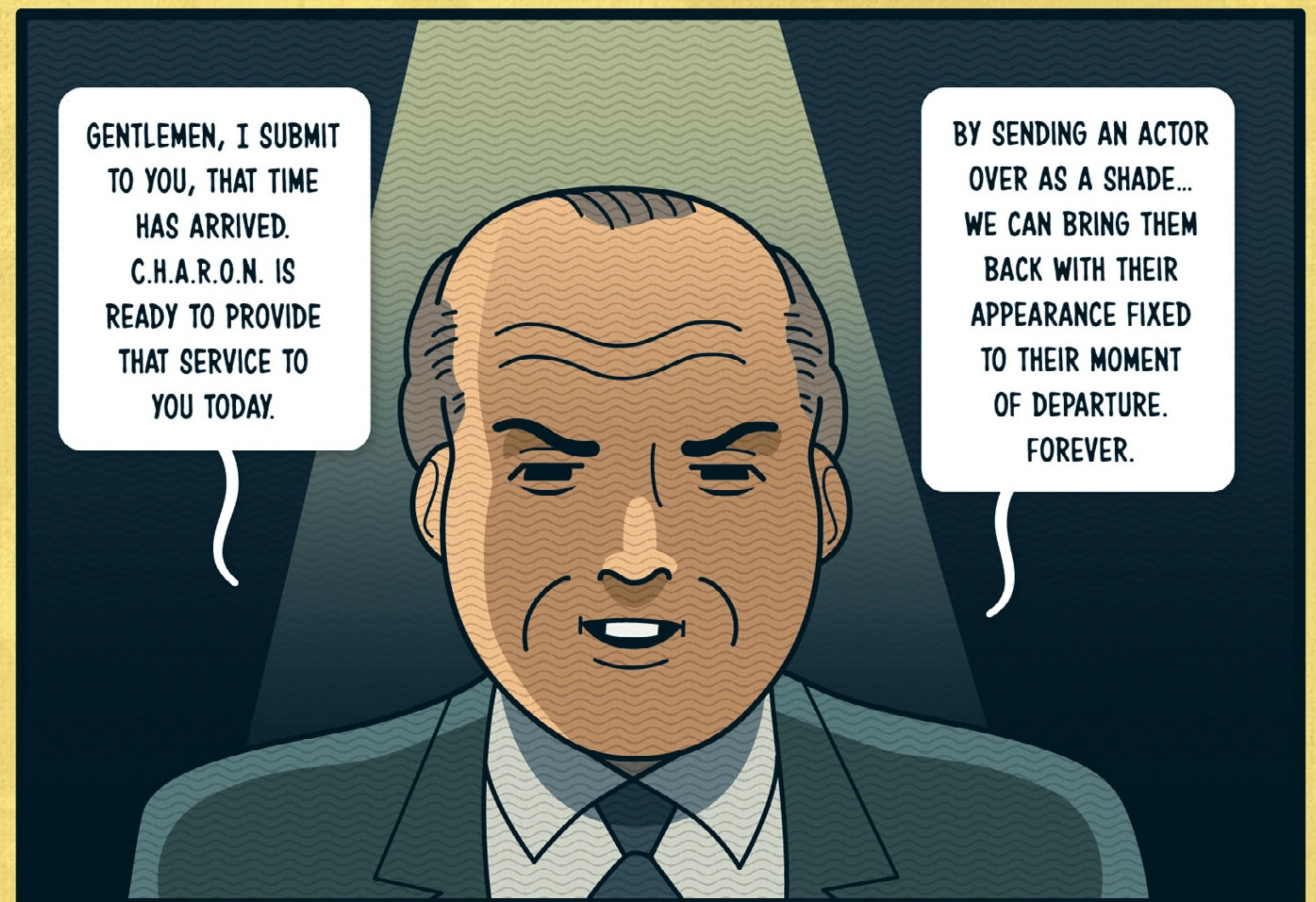
IT'S A CHANCE TO RECLAIM TALENT
FROM THE GRIP OF DEATH
AND EXTEND THEIR REVENUE
STREAMS INFINITELY.



AND GENTLEMEN, YOU NEED NOT
LIMIT YOURSELVES TO ACTORS
ALREADY DEAD. LOOK AROUND
AT THE LIVING ACTORS TODAY...



...WOULDN'T YOU LIKE FOR
YOUR TOP TALENT TO
STAY THE SAME AGE AS
THEY ARE TODAY? KEEPING
THEM IN HIGH-EARNING
ROLES FOR DECADES?



GENTLEMEN, I SUBMIT
TO YOU, THAT TIME
HAS ARRIVED.
C.H.A.R.O.N. IS
READY TO PROVIDE
THAT SERVICE TO
YOU TODAY.

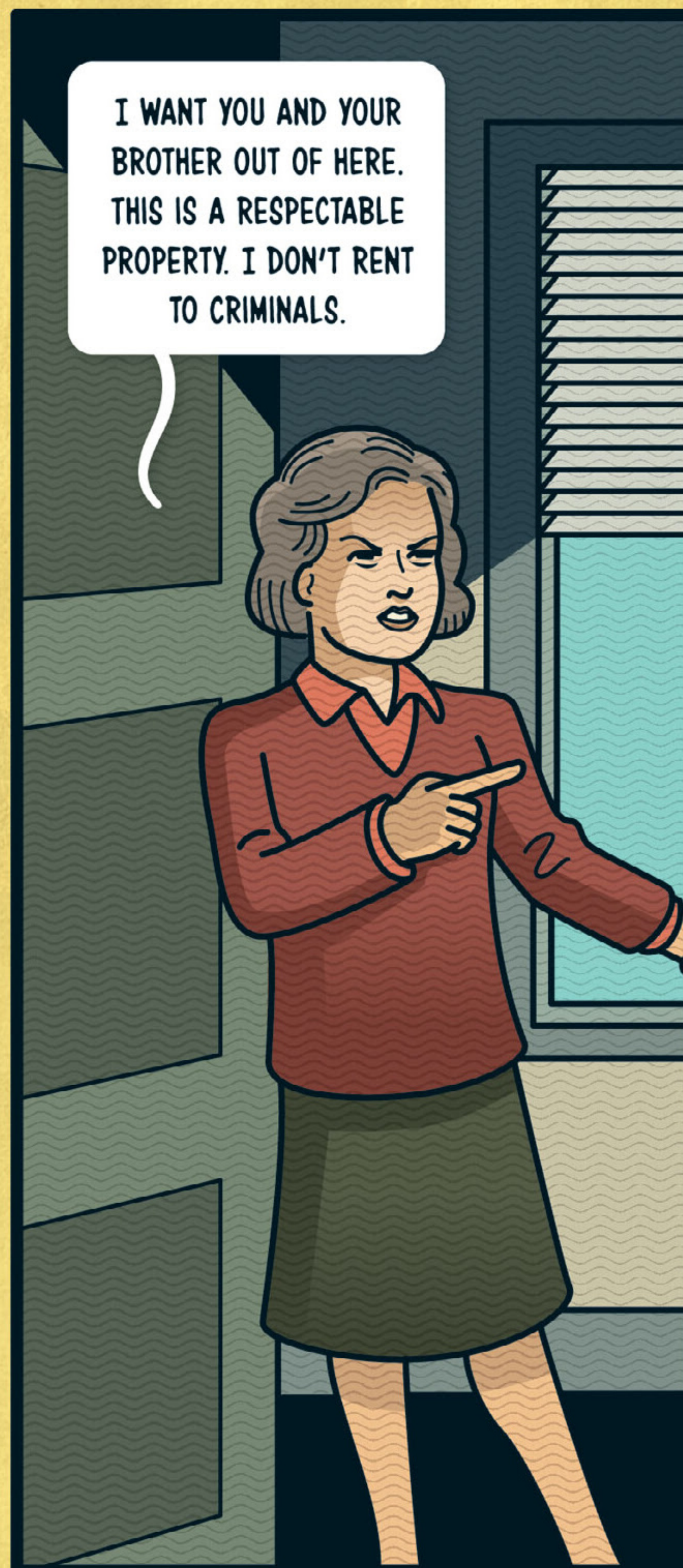
BY SENDING AN ACTOR
OVER AS A SHADE...
WE CAN BRING THEM
BACK WITH THEIR
APPEARANCE FIXED
TO THEIR MOMENT
OF DEPARTURE.
FOREVER.



JIM WAS SITTING IN JARVIS' APARTMENT WHEN THERE WAS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. OPENING IT, HE FACED A MAN HOLDING A BADGE.



ROGER JARVIS, I HAVE A WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST IN THE ABDUCTION AND MURDERS OF KIMBERLY WHITE, CAROL ROSS, AND POLICE LIEUTENANT FRANK BURGESS.



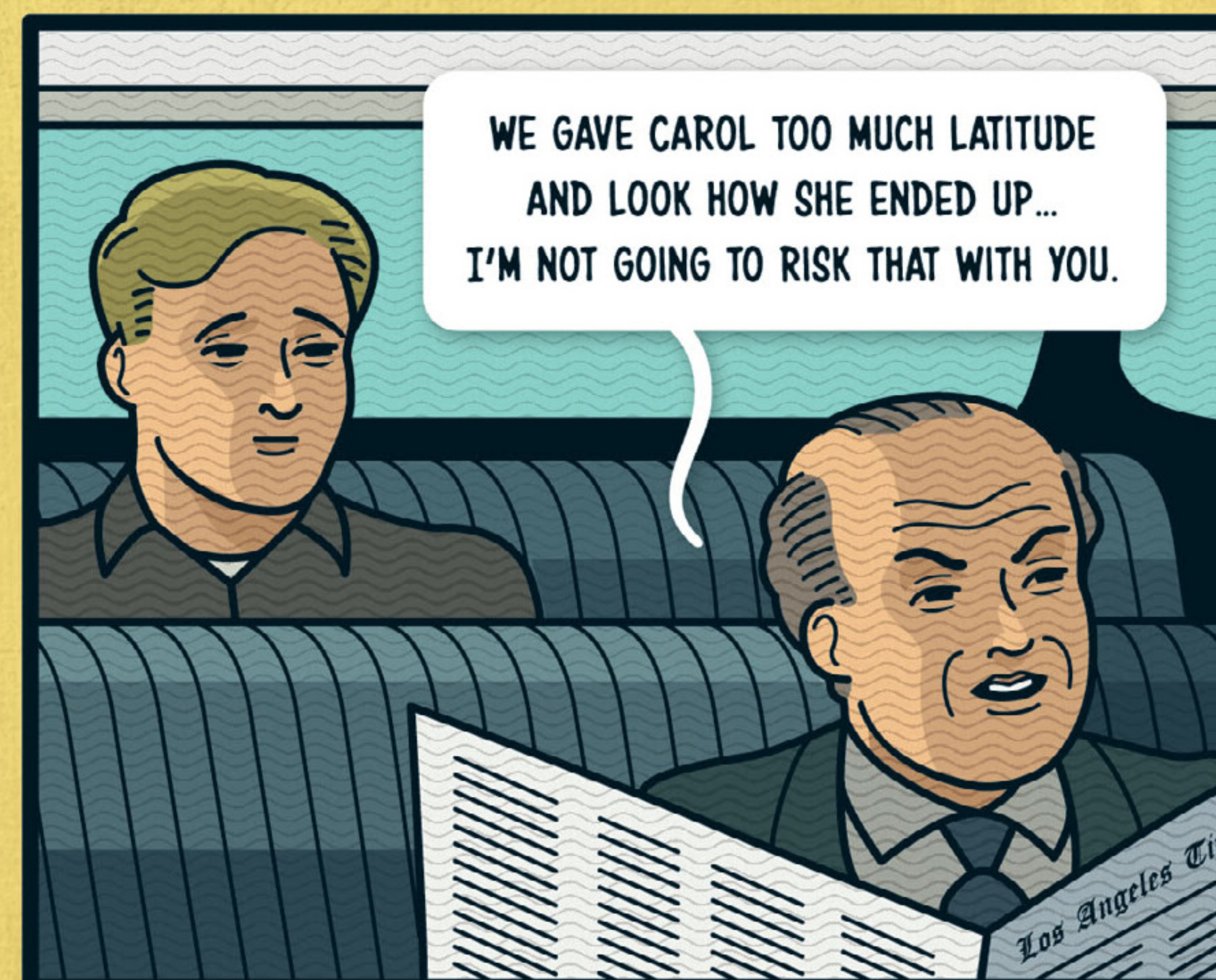
I WANT YOU AND YOUR BROTHER OUT OF HERE. THIS IS A RESPECTABLE PROPERTY. I DON'T RENT TO CRIMINALS.



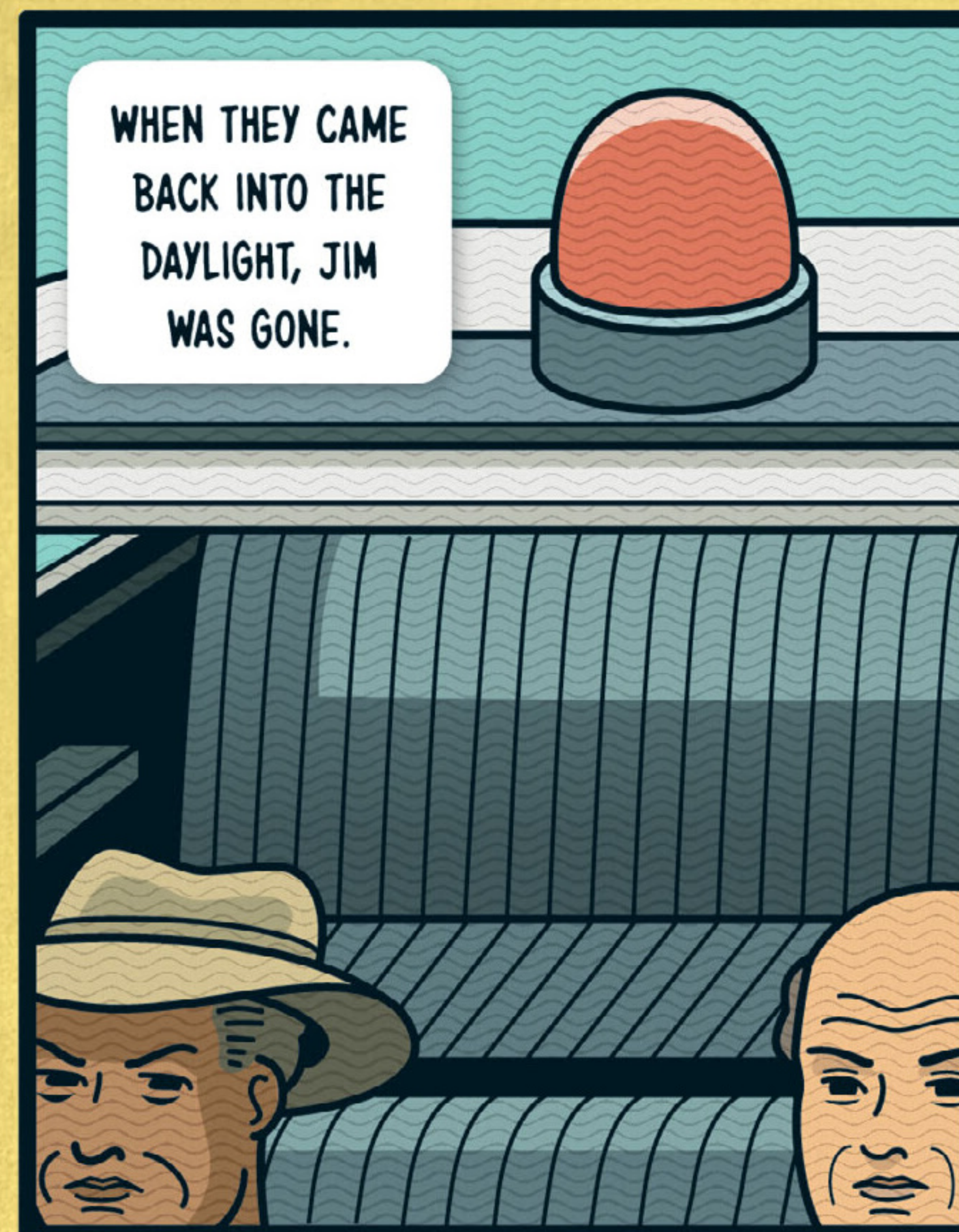
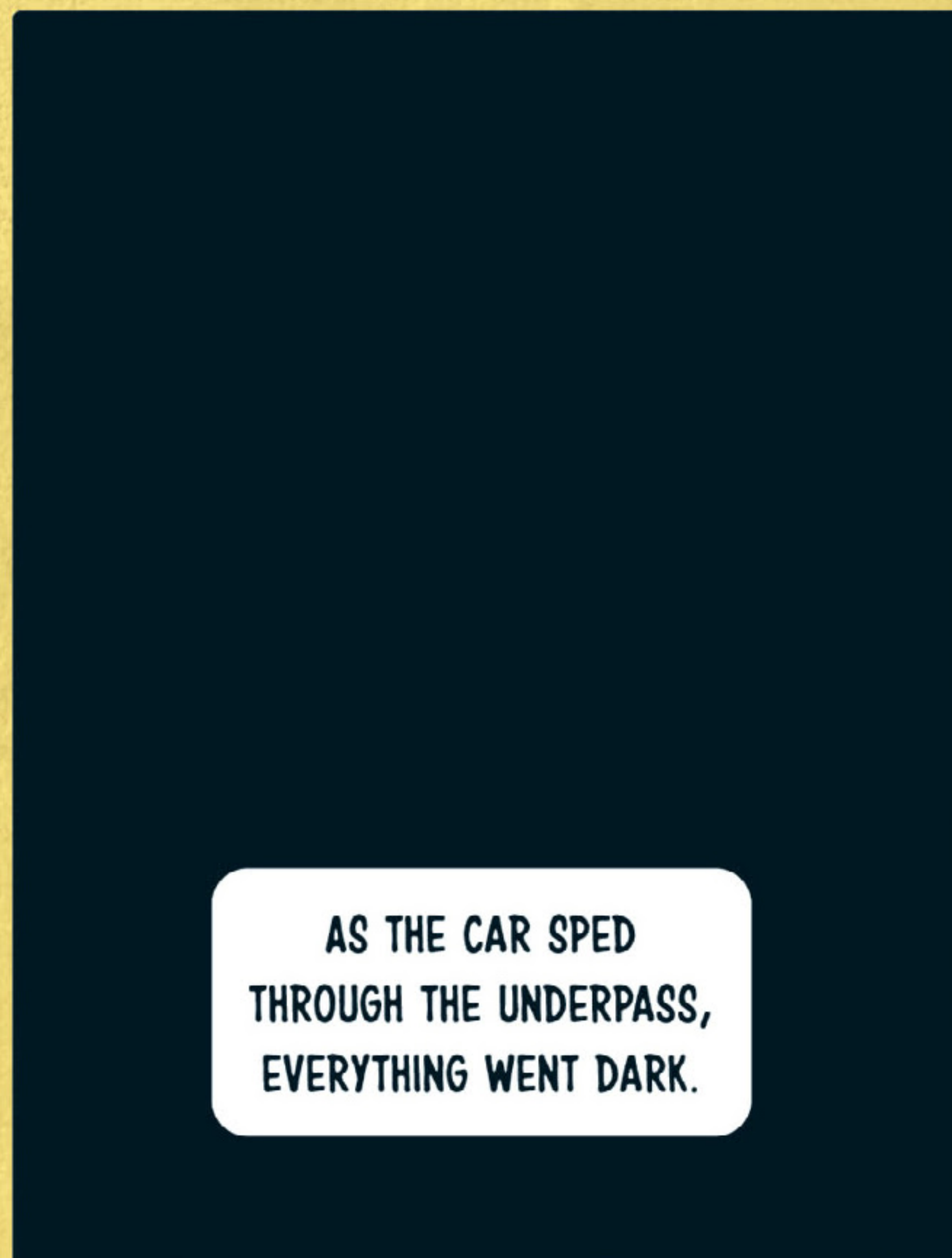
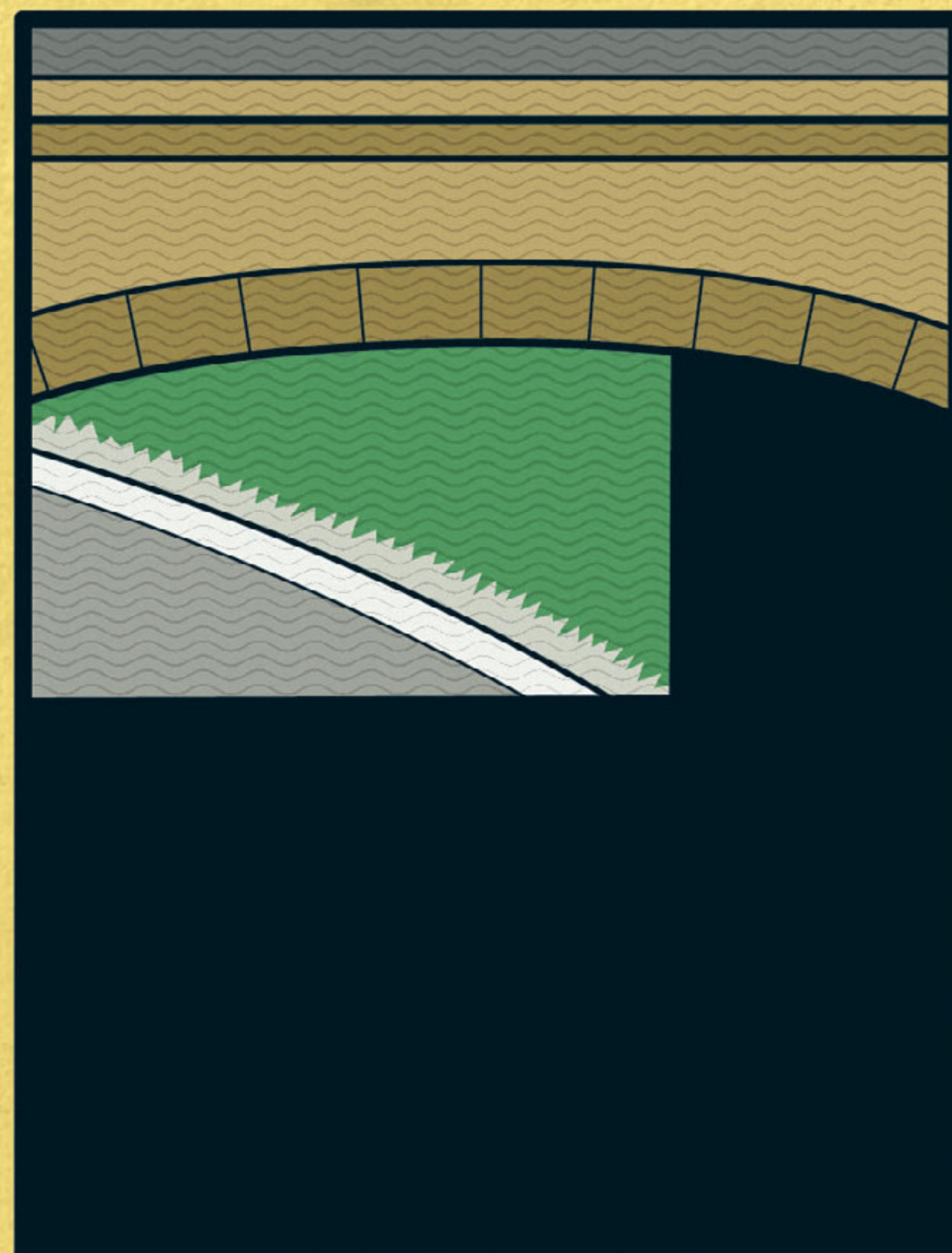
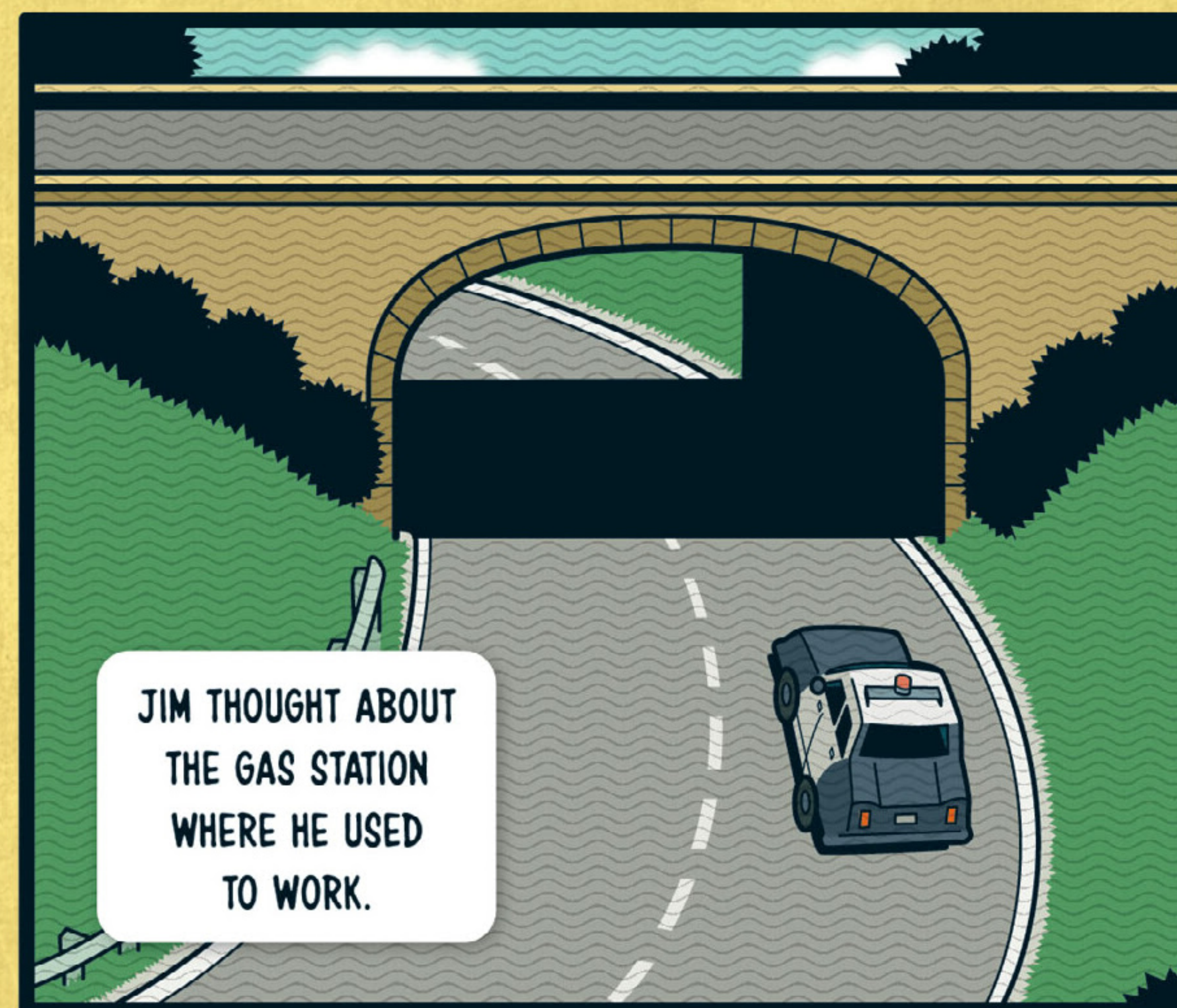
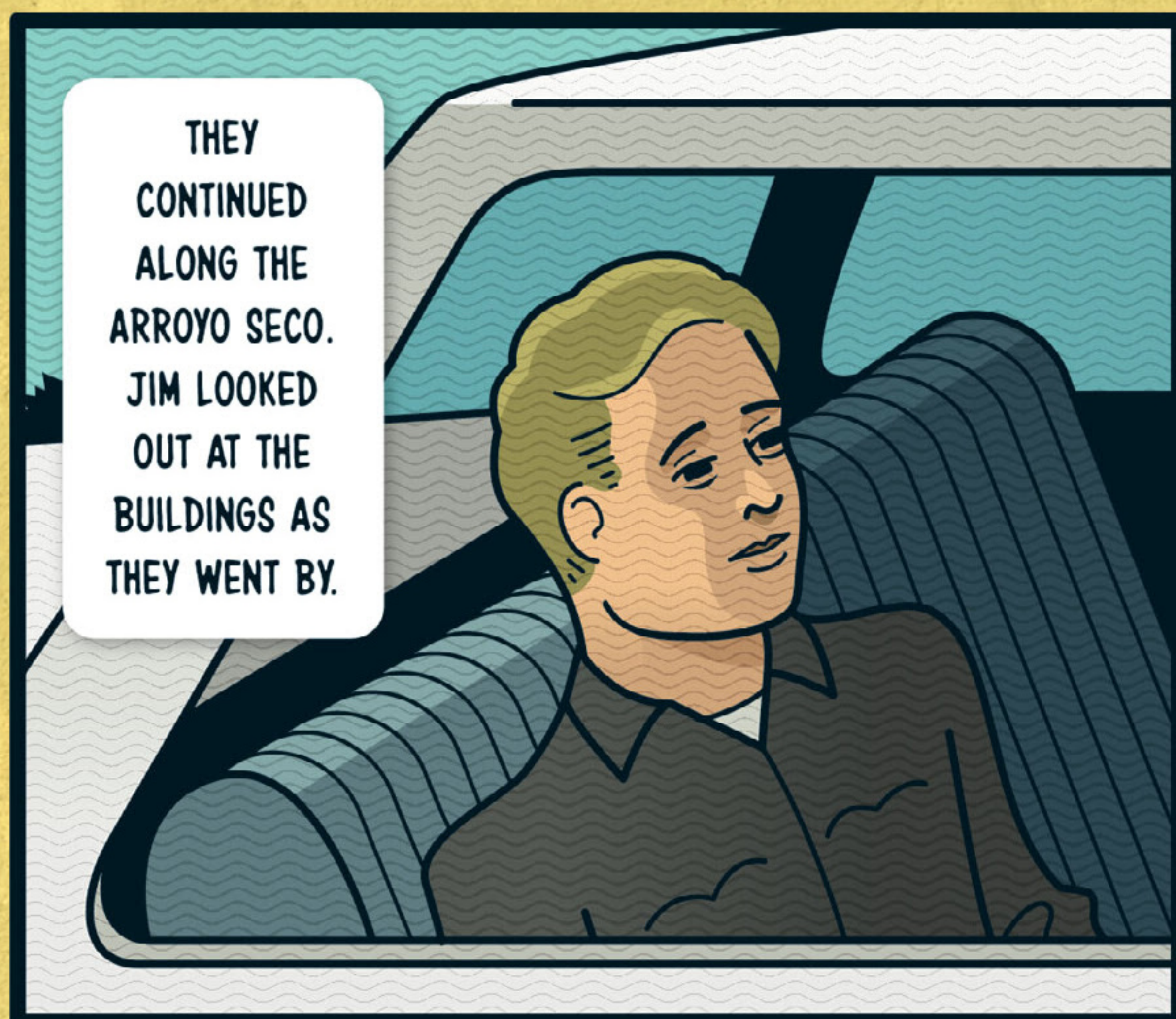
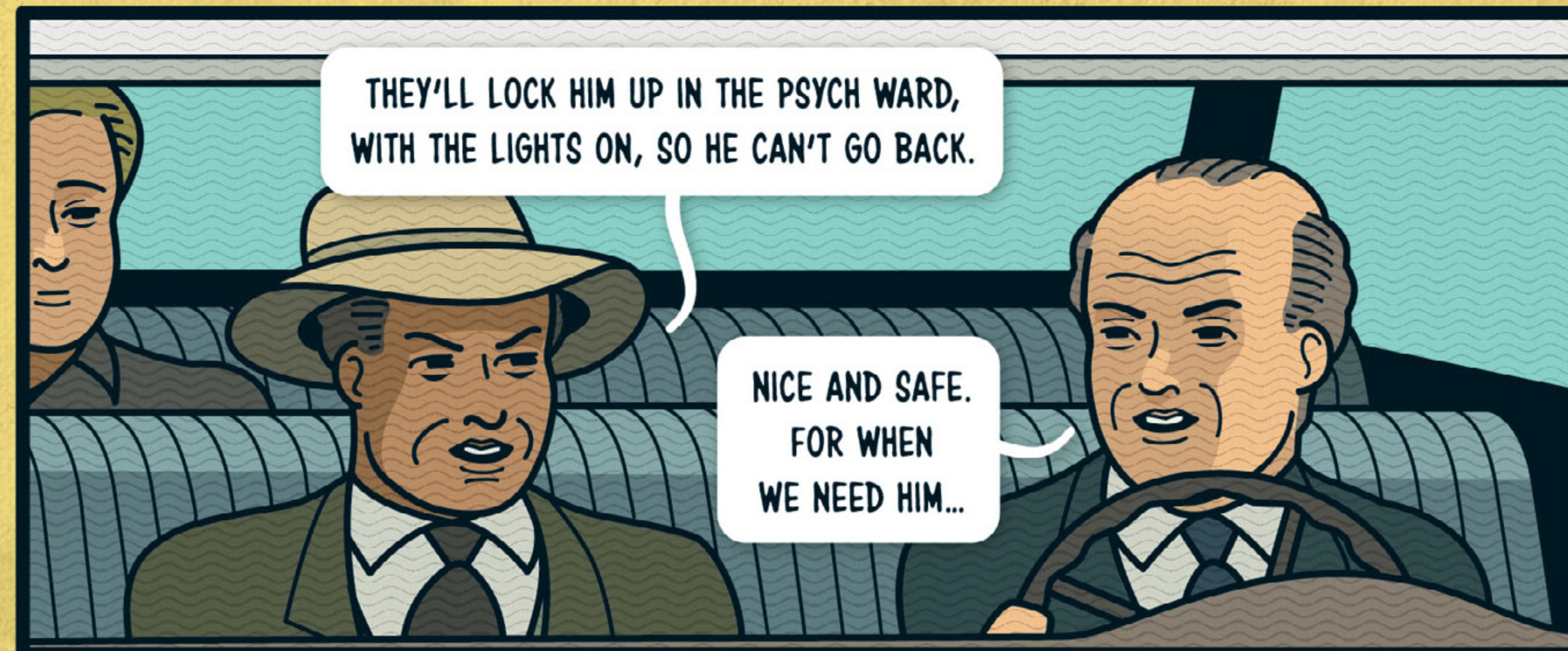
LOOKS LIKE THE DODGERS ARE IN THE TANK AGAIN. SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE...

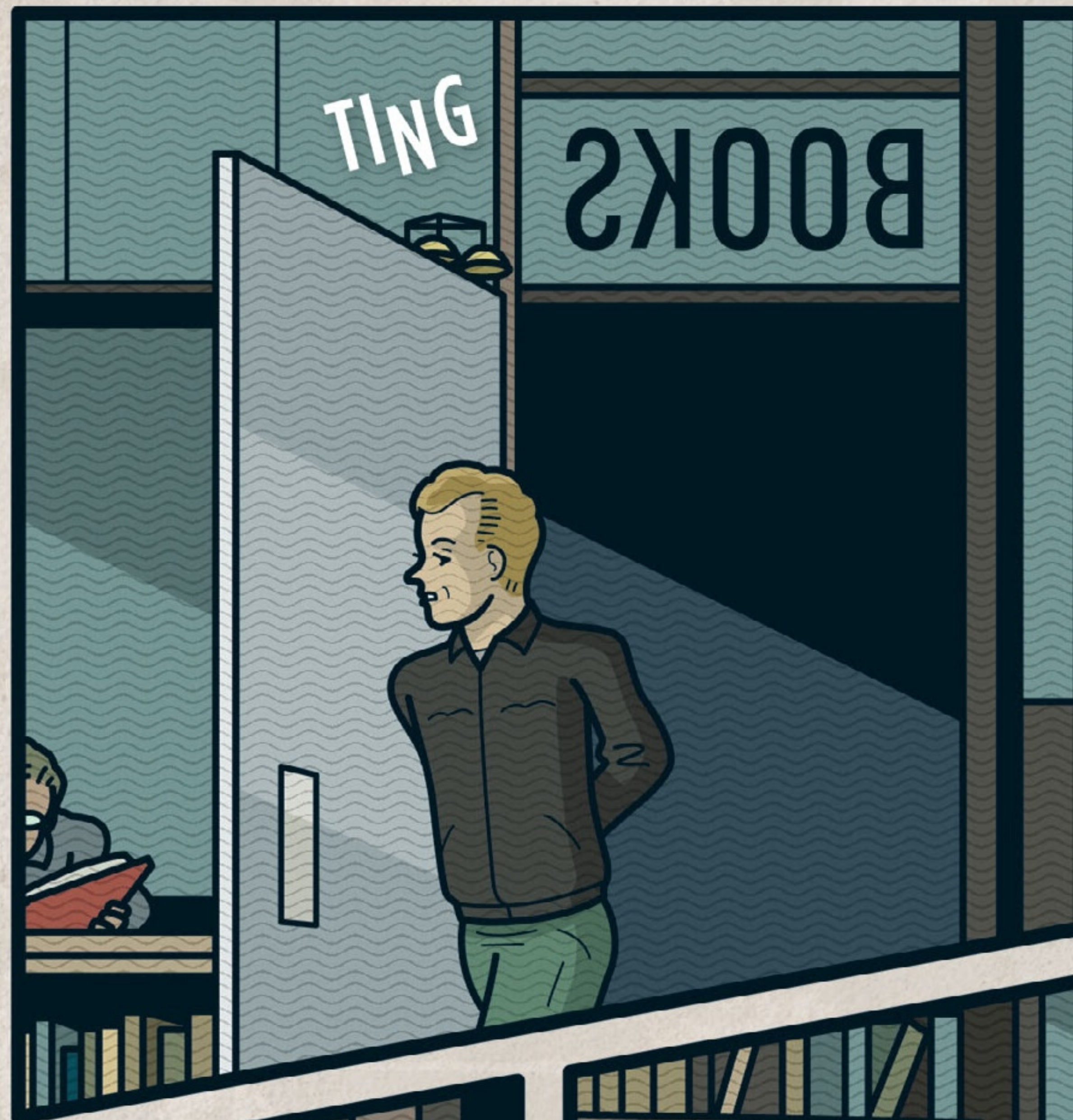


...LIKE OUR RELATIONSHIP, JIM. YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP ON WORKING FOR ME. BUT IN A MORE CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT.

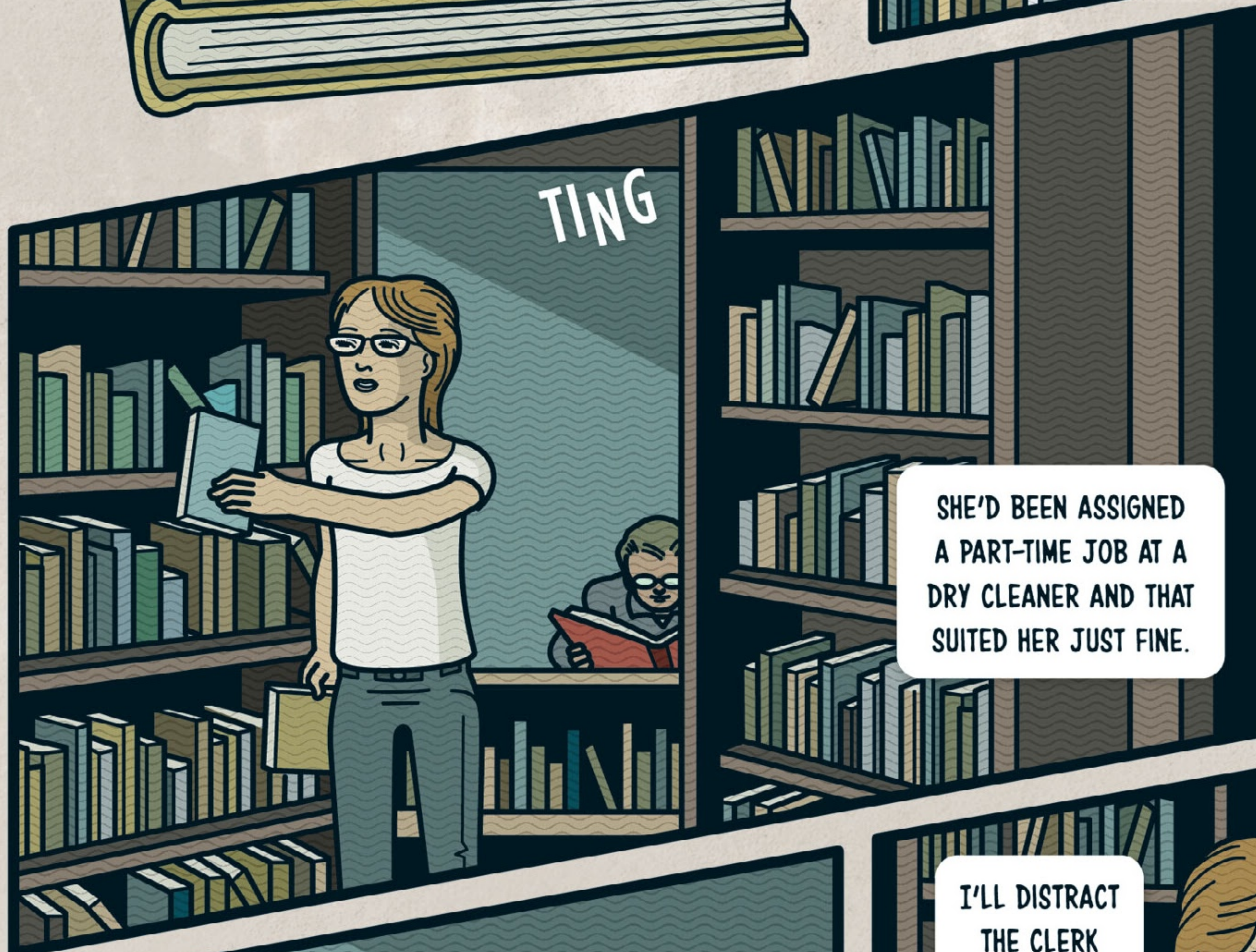


WE GAVE CAROL TOO MUCH LATITUDE AND LOOK HOW SHE ENDED UP... I'M NOT GOING TO RISK THAT WITH YOU.

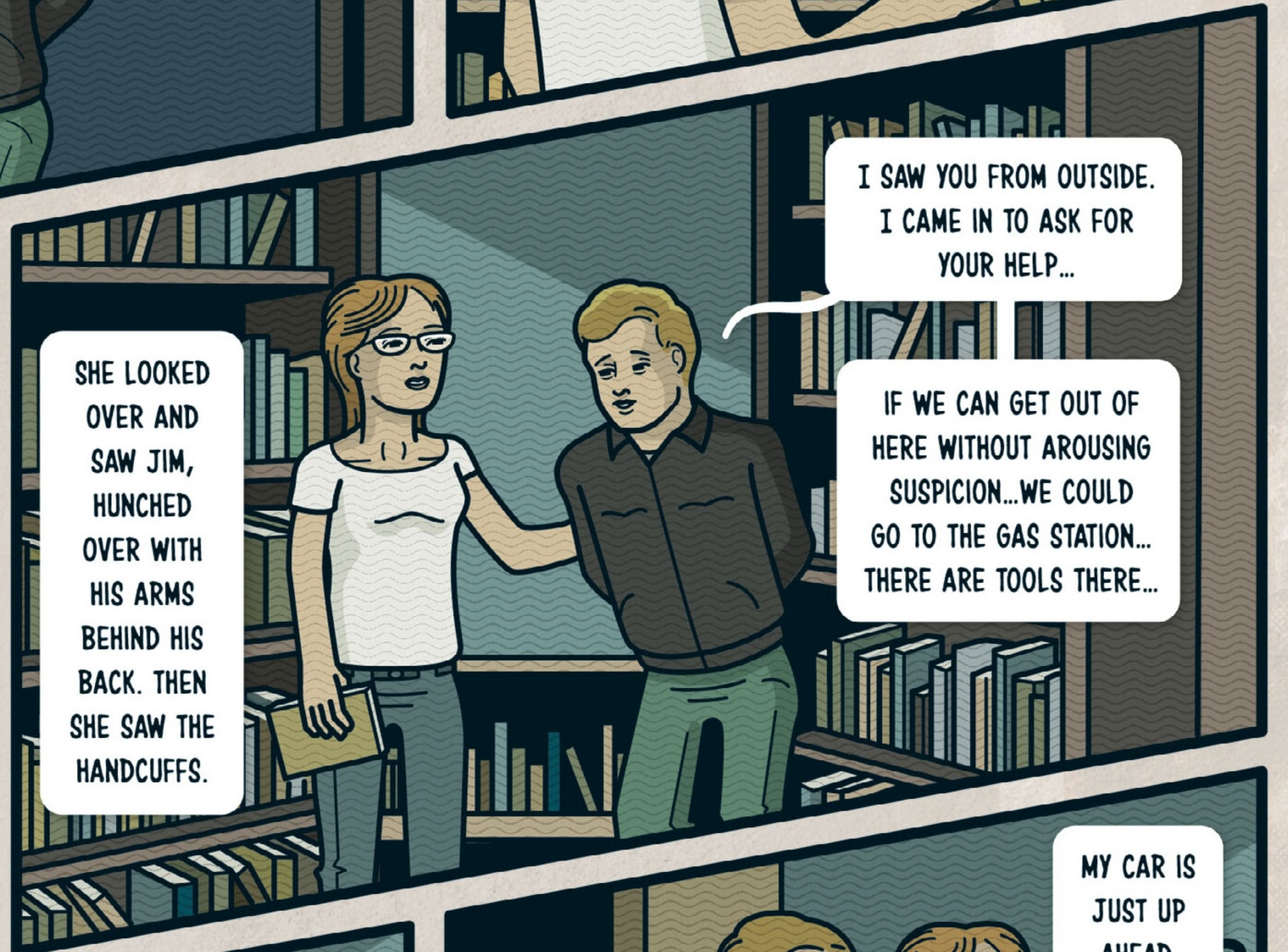




SHE'D FINISHED THE BOOKS SHE GOT LAST MONTH AND WAS LOOKING FOR NEW ONES.



SHE'D BEEN ASSIGNED A PART-TIME JOB AT A DRY CLEANER AND THAT SUITED HER JUST FINE.



SHE LOOKED OVER AND SAW JIM, HUNCHED OVER WITH HIS ARMS BEHIND HIS BACK. THEN SHE SAW THE HANDCUFFS.

I SAW YOU FROM OUTSIDE. I CAME IN TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP...

IF WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION...WE COULD GO TO THE GAS STATION... THERE ARE TOOLS THERE...



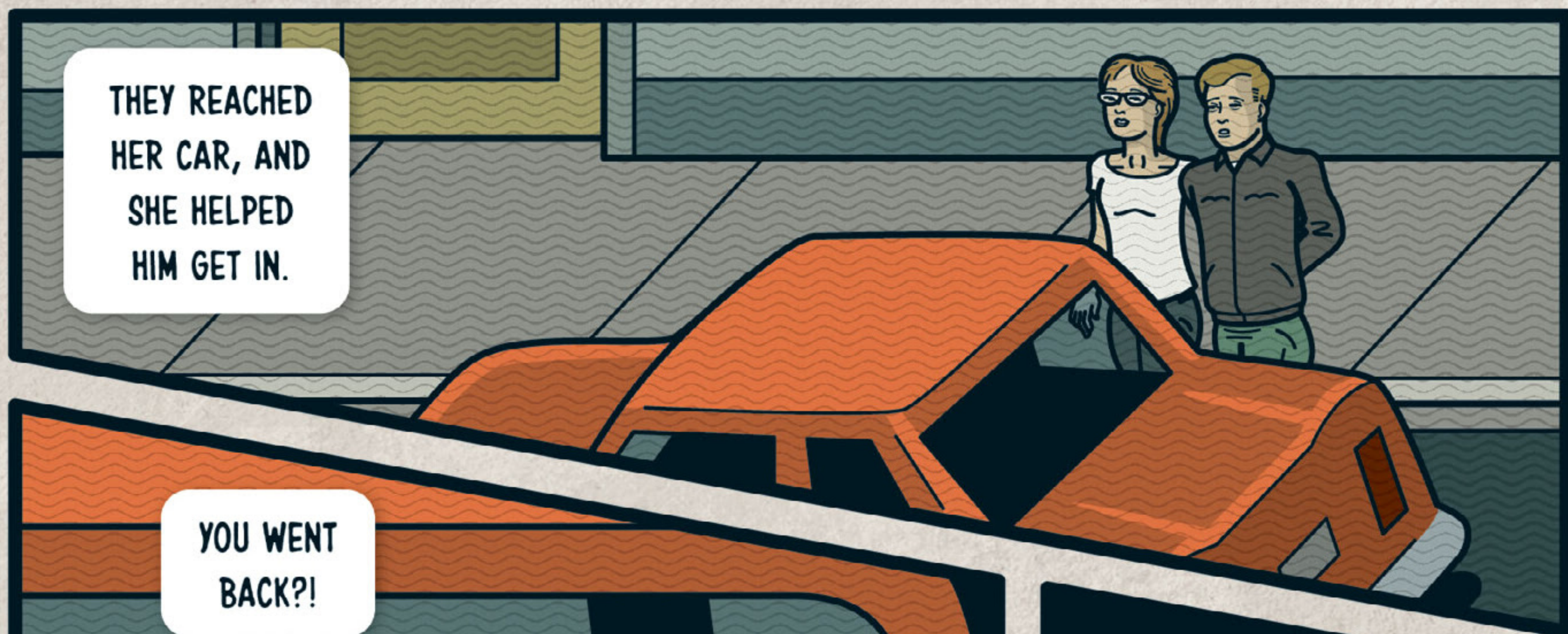
THE CLERK WAS STILL BURIED IN HIS BOOK.



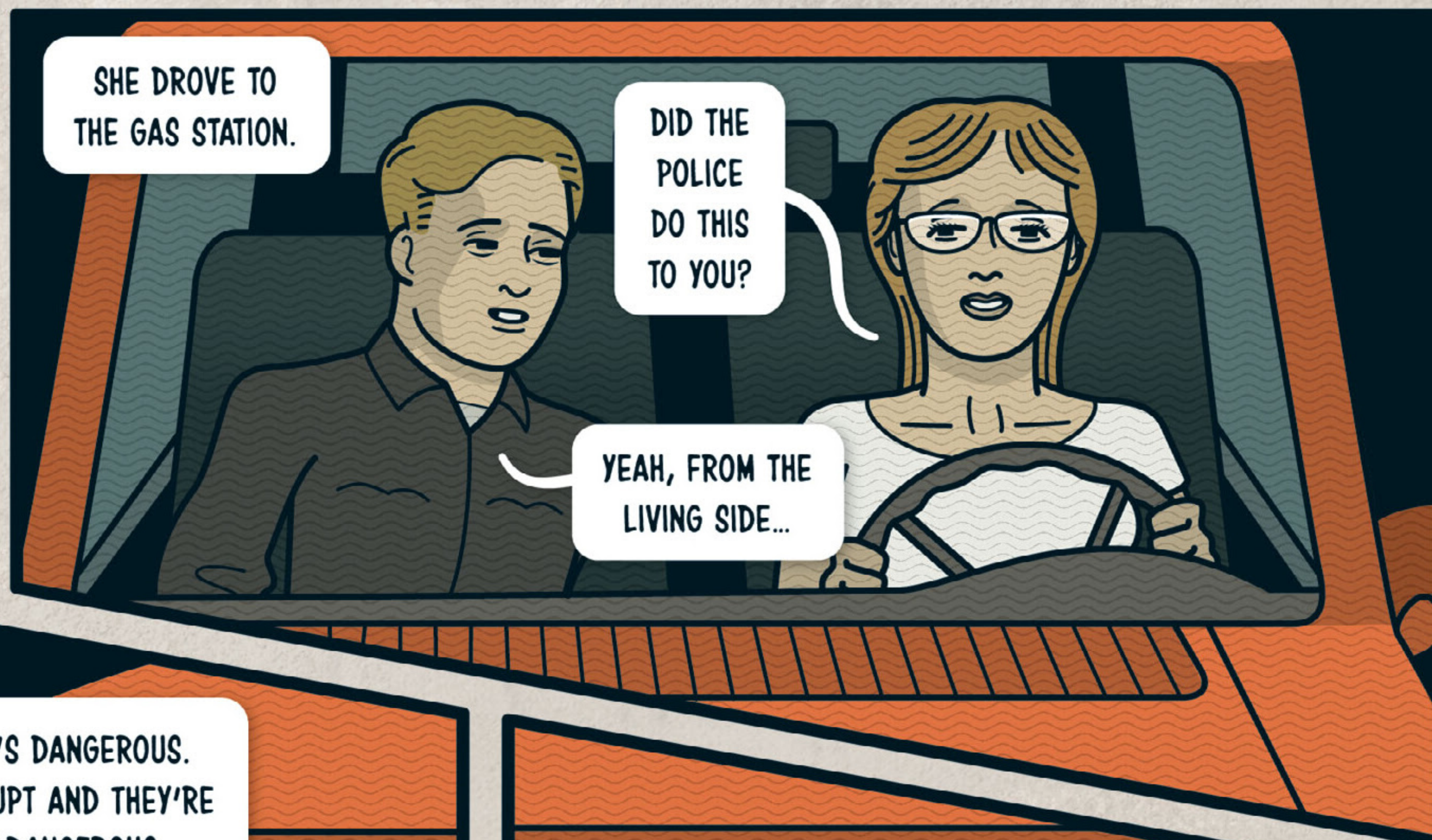
I'LL DISTRACT THE CLERK WHILE YOU SLIP OUT...



MY CAR IS JUST UP AHEAD.



THEY REACHED
HER CAR, AND
SHE HELPED
HIM GET IN.



SHE DROVE TO
THE GAS STATION.

DID THE
POLICE
DO THIS
TO YOU?

YEAH, FROM THE
LIVING SIDE...



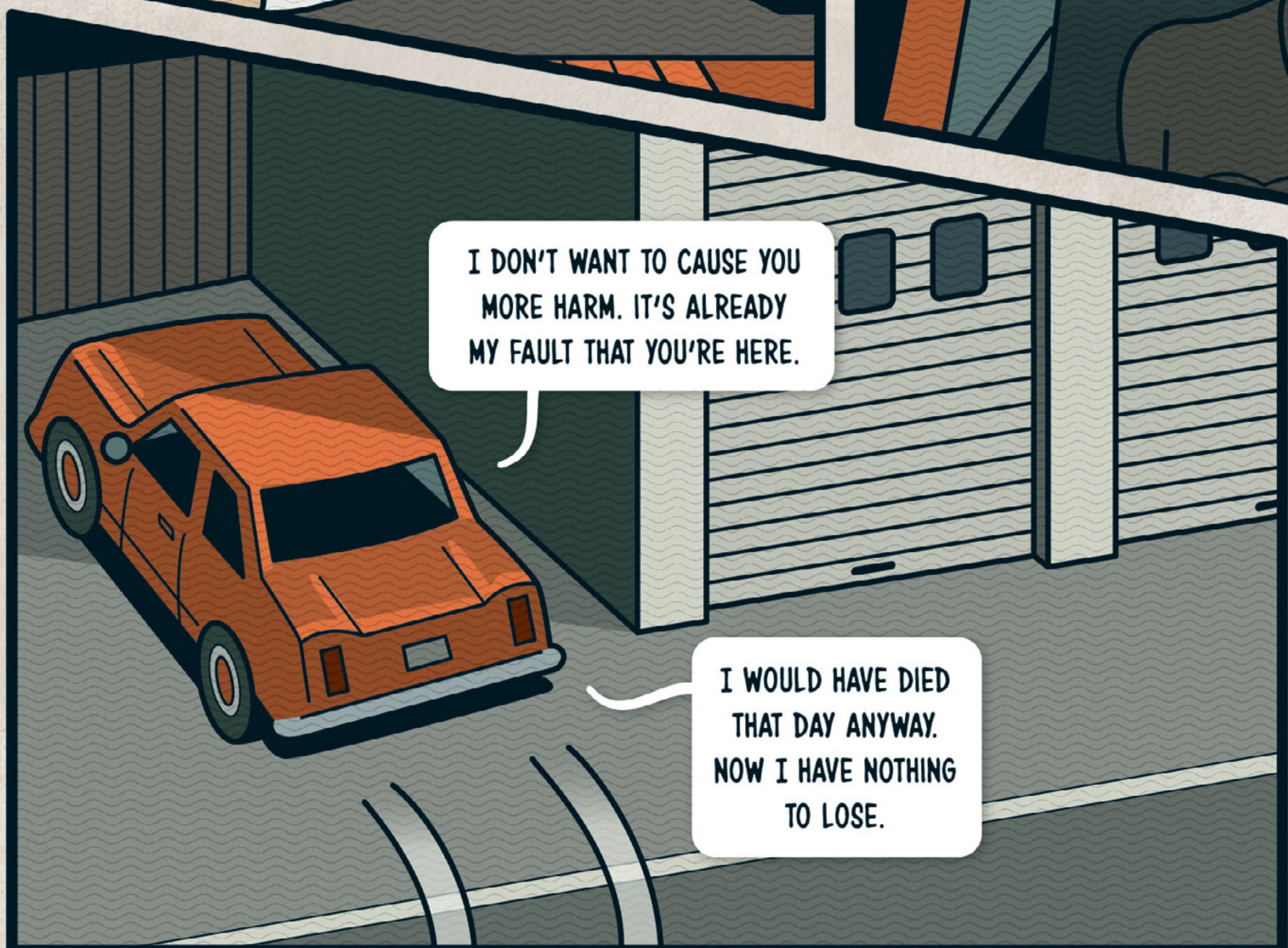
YOU WENT
BACK?!



THERE IS A WAY TO DO IT, BUT IT'S DANGEROUS.
THE PEOPLE RUNNING IT ARE CORRUPT AND THEY'RE
COPS, WHICH MAKES IT DOUBLY DANGEROUS.



SO, COULD I
GO BACK?

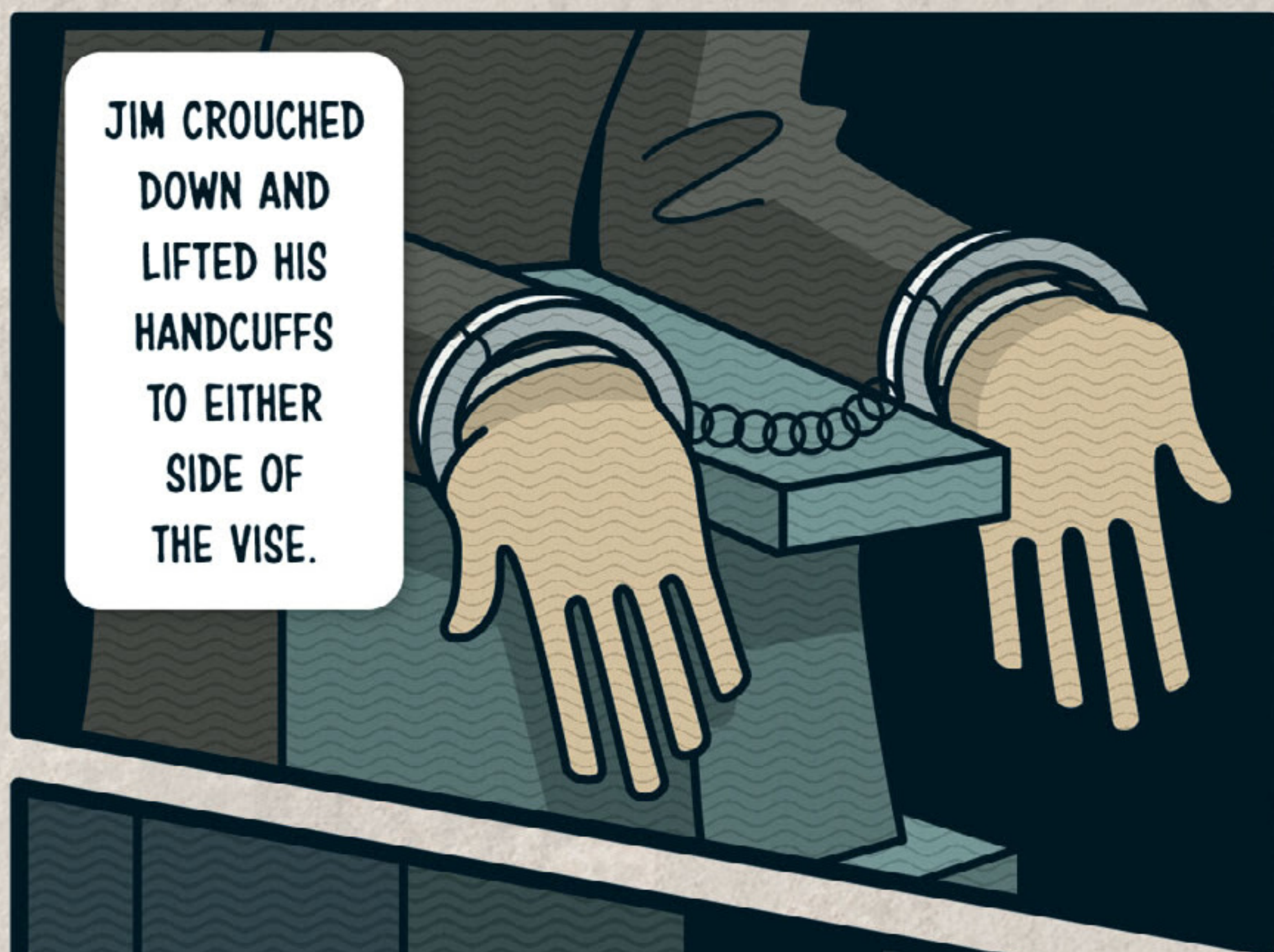


I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU
MORE HARM. IT'S ALREADY
MY FAULT THAT YOU'RE HERE.

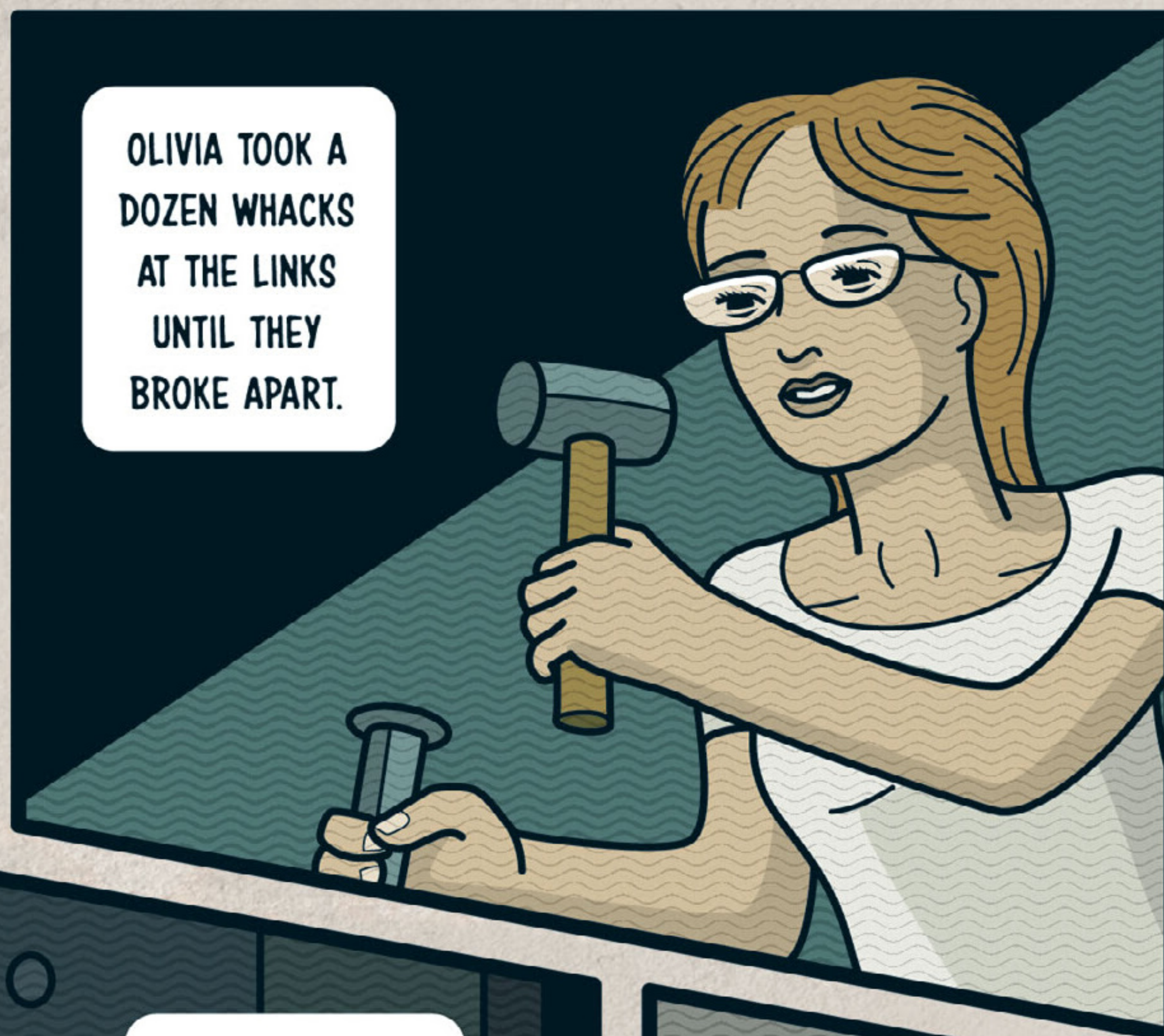
I WOULD HAVE DIED
THAT DAY ANYWAY.
NOW I HAVE NOTHING
TO LOSE.



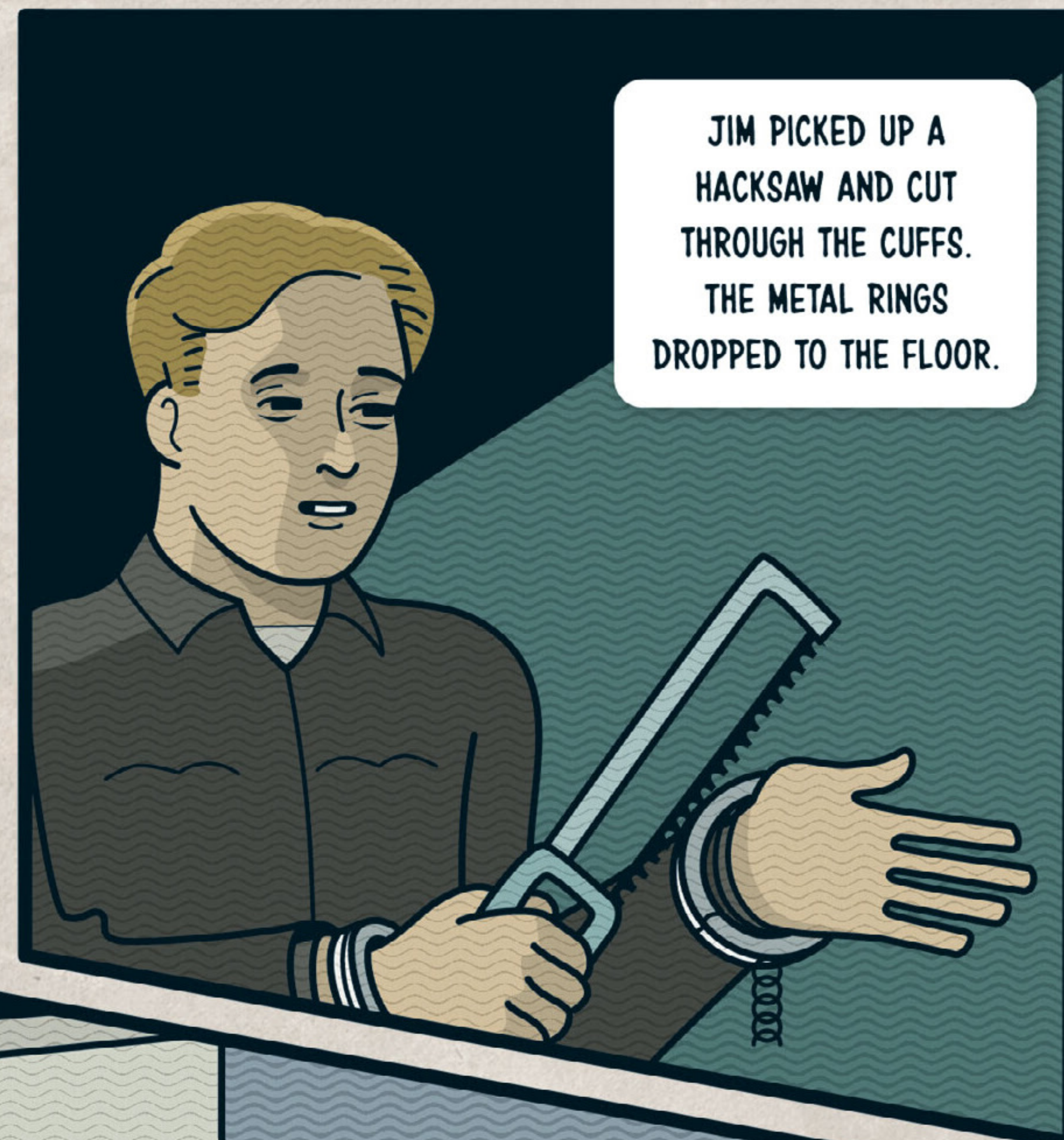
THE NIGHT MAN WAS
SURPRISED TO SEE
JIM. HE HEMMED AND
HAWED BUT FINALLY
AGREED TO OPEN
THE REPAIR BAY
FOR THEM.



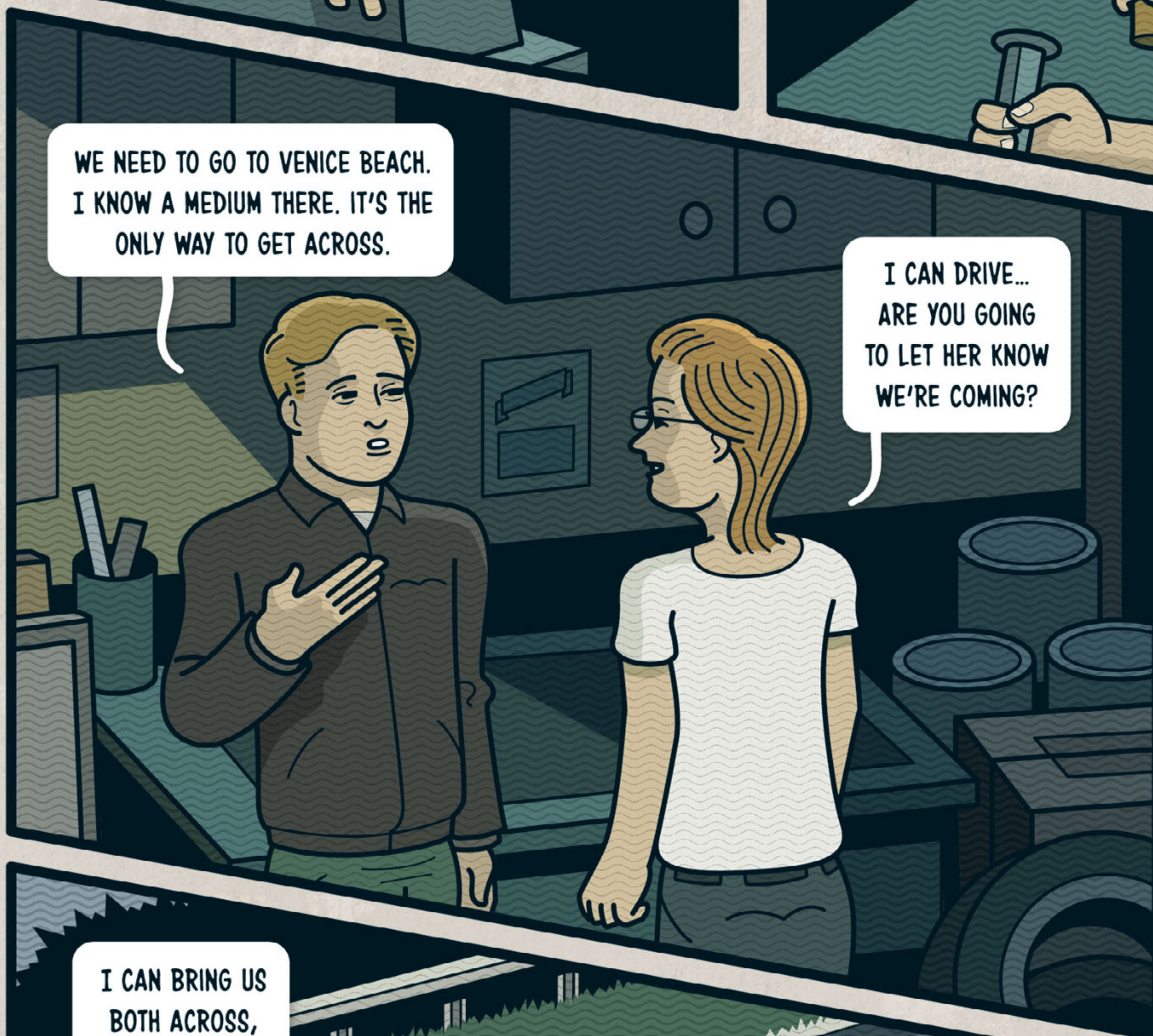
JIM CROUCHED DOWN AND LIFTED HIS HANDCUFFS TO EITHER SIDE OF THE VISE.



OLIVIA TOOK A DOZEN WHACKS AT THE LINKS UNTIL THEY BROKE APART.



JIM PICKED UP A HACKSAW AND CUT THROUGH THE CUFFS. THE METAL RINGS DROPPED TO THE FLOOR.

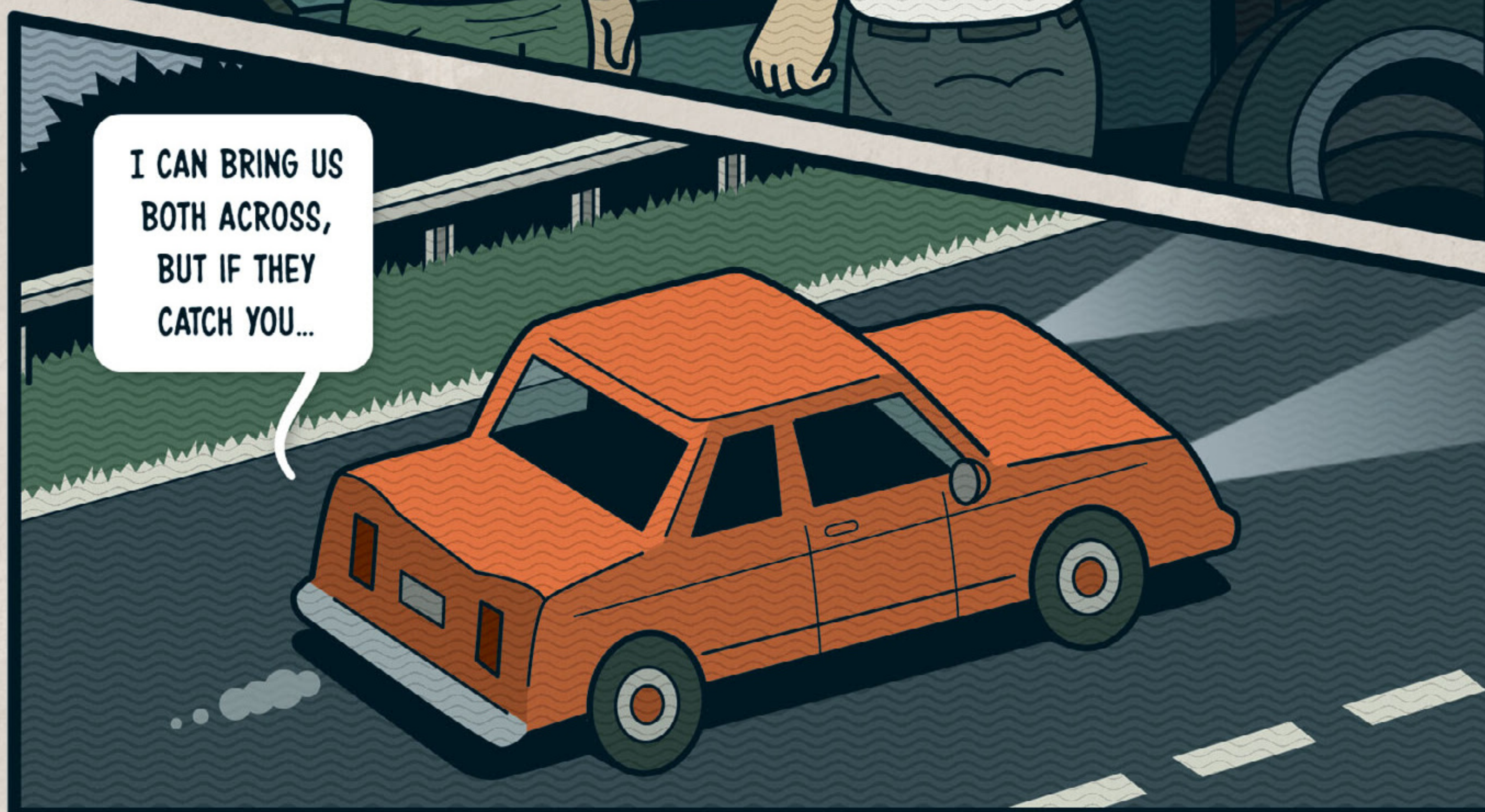


WE NEED TO GO TO VENICE BEACH. I KNOW A MEDIUM THERE. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET ACROSS.

I CAN DRIVE... ARE YOU GOING TO LET HER KNOW WE'RE COMING?



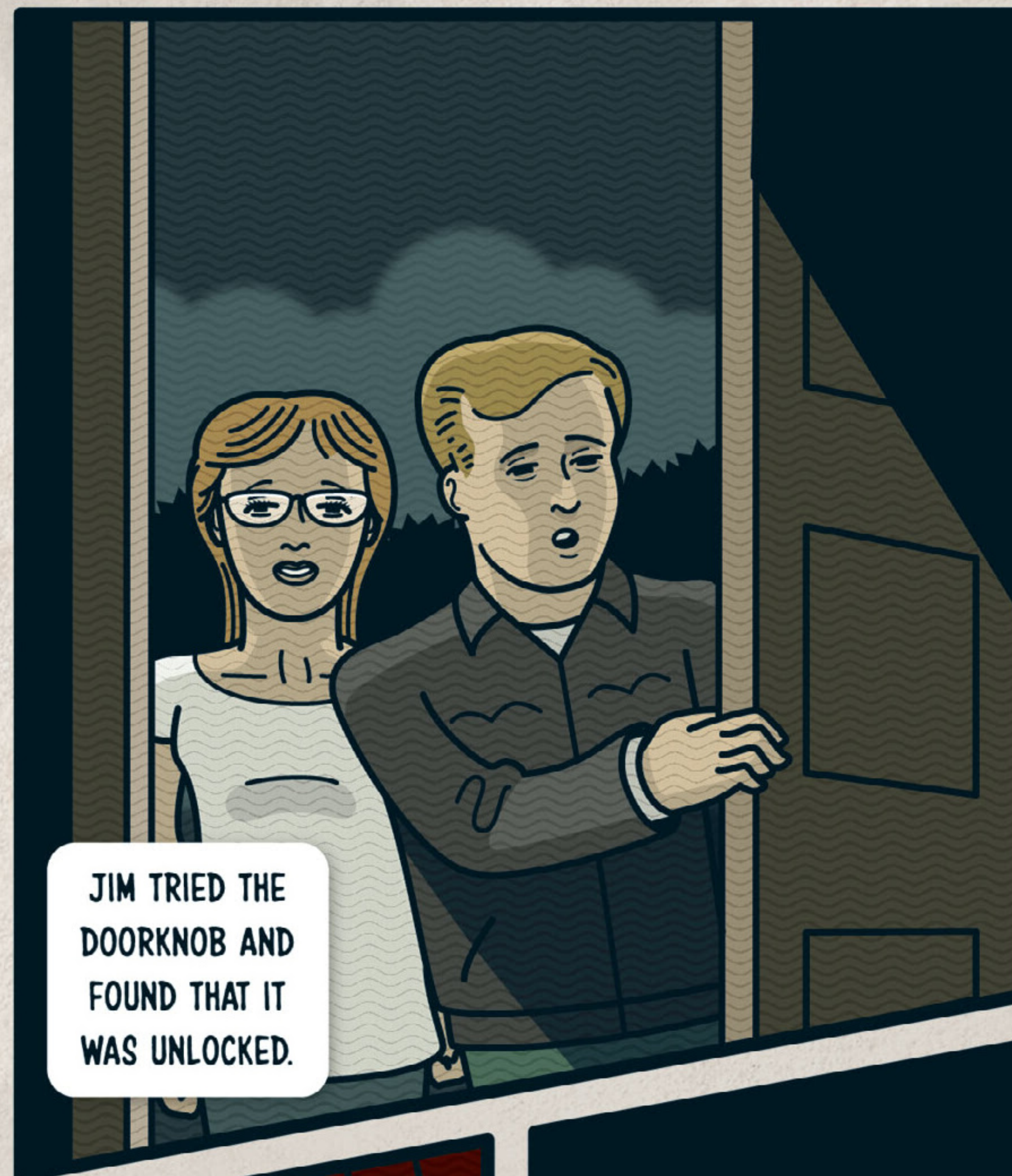
NO, NOT THIS TIME.



I CAN BRING US BOTH ACROSS, BUT IF THEY CATCH YOU...



JIM MADE A FEW RAPS AT THE DOOR. NOTHING. HE KNOCKED AGAIN. STILL NOTHING.



JIM TRIED THE DOORKNOB AND FOUND THAT IT WAS UNLOCKED.



SUDDENLY, A LIGHT SWITCHED ON.

PLANNING A LITTLE IMPROMPTU TRIP?



OKAY, YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, CARLA.

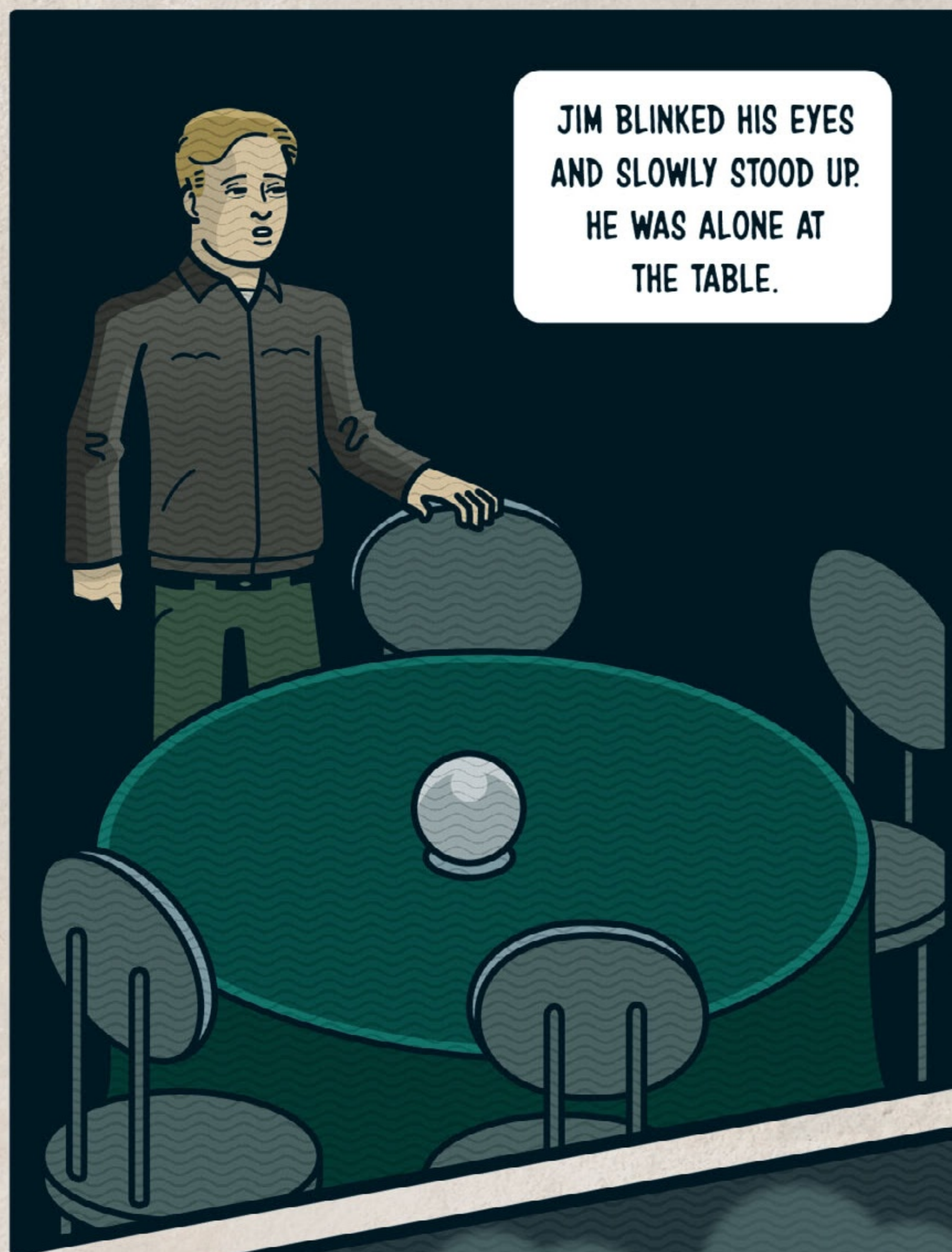


CARLA CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE DRAPES. SHE LOOKED FRIGHTENED.



CARLA BEGAN HER SINGSONG INCANTATIONS AND THE CRYSTAL BALL BEGAN TO PULSE WITH LIGHT.

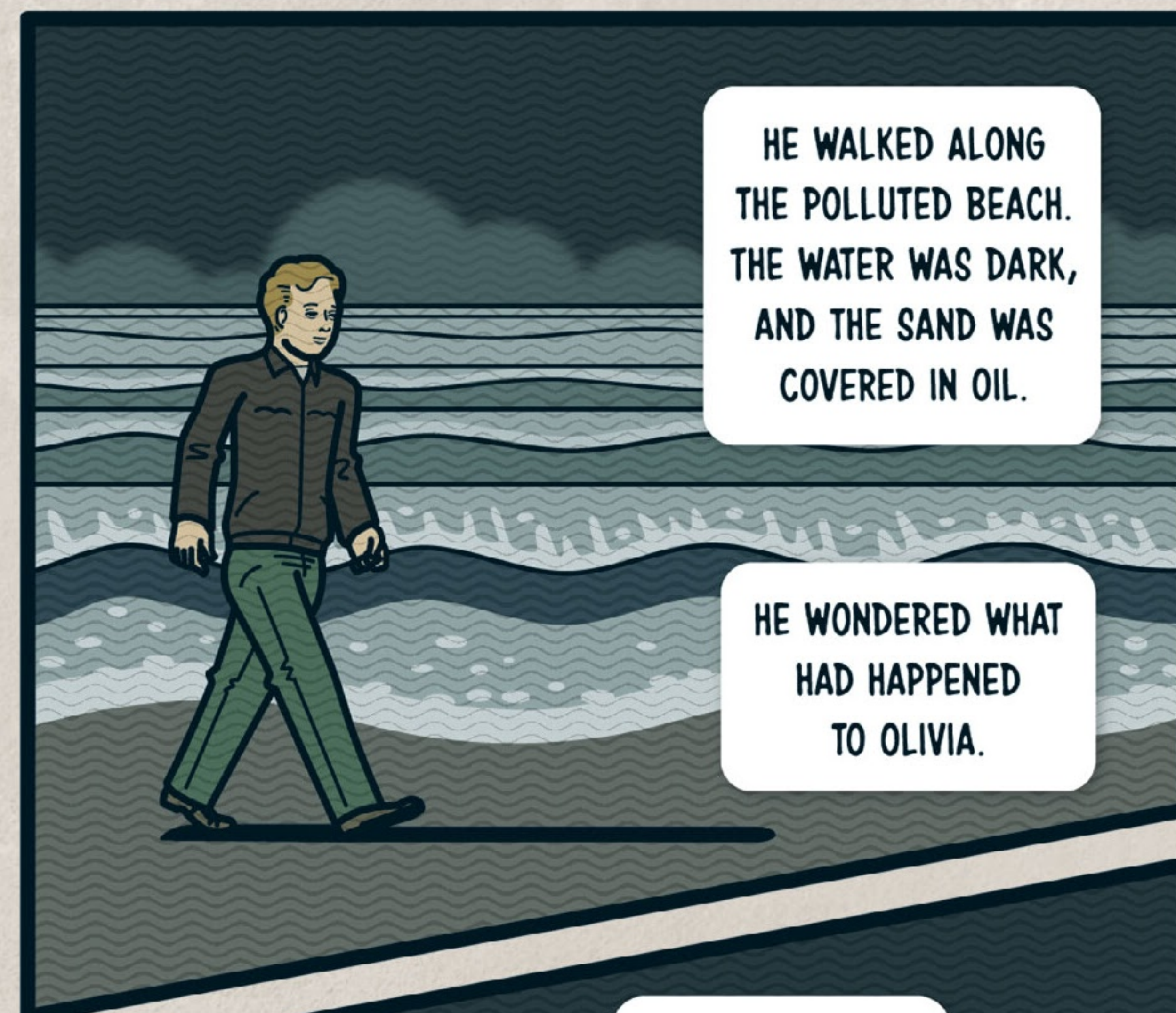
THE ROOM WENT DARK.



JIM BLINKED HIS EYES
AND SLOWLY STOOD UP.
HE WAS ALONE AT
THE TABLE.



OLIVIA'S CAR
WAS GONE, TOO.



HE WALKED ALONG
THE POLLUTED BEACH.
THE WATER WAS DARK,
AND THE SAND WAS
COVERED IN OIL.

HE WONDERED WHAT
HAD HAPPENED
TO OLIVIA.



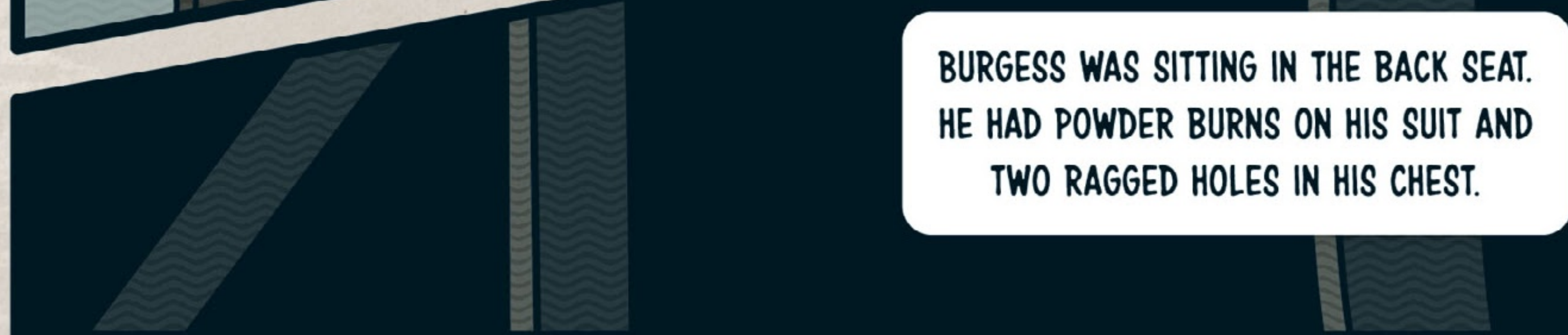
A POLICE
CRUISER
ROLLED UP.

SIR, WE'RE GOING
TO NEED TO SEE
SOME IDENTIFICATION.



JIM TOOK OUT HIS
WALLET AND HANDED
OVER HIS LICENSE. HE
WATCHED WHILE THE
OFFICER EXAMINED IT.

SIR, YOU NEED TO
COME WITH US.



BURGESS WAS SITTING IN THE BACK SEAT.
HE HAD POWDER BURNS ON HIS SUIT AND
TWO RAGGED HOLES IN HIS CHEST.



I'M WORKING FOR
THE A.L.P.D. NOW.

APPARENTLY, YOU DIDN'T
TAKE CAROL'S OUTCOME
TO HEART.

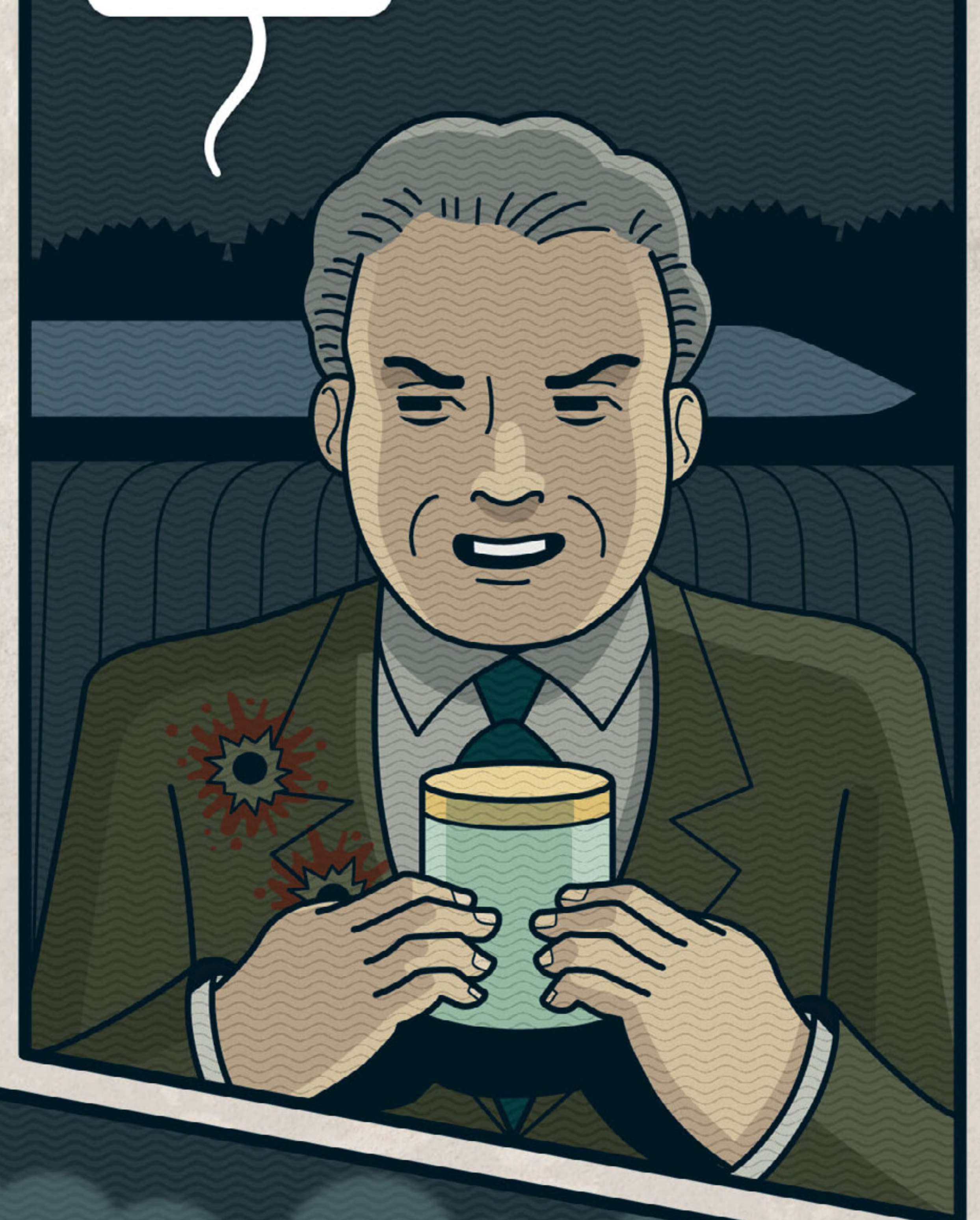


THIS IS WHERE SHE ENDED UP,
AND IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL,
YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF IN THE
SAME POSITION.



OLIVIA IS HERE WITH US AND SHE'S SAFE FOR NOW,
BUT THERE'S TOO MUCH RIDING ON THIS TO LET
YOU SCREW IT UP.

YOU REALLY DON'T
WANT TO BE ON
HADES' BAD SIDE...

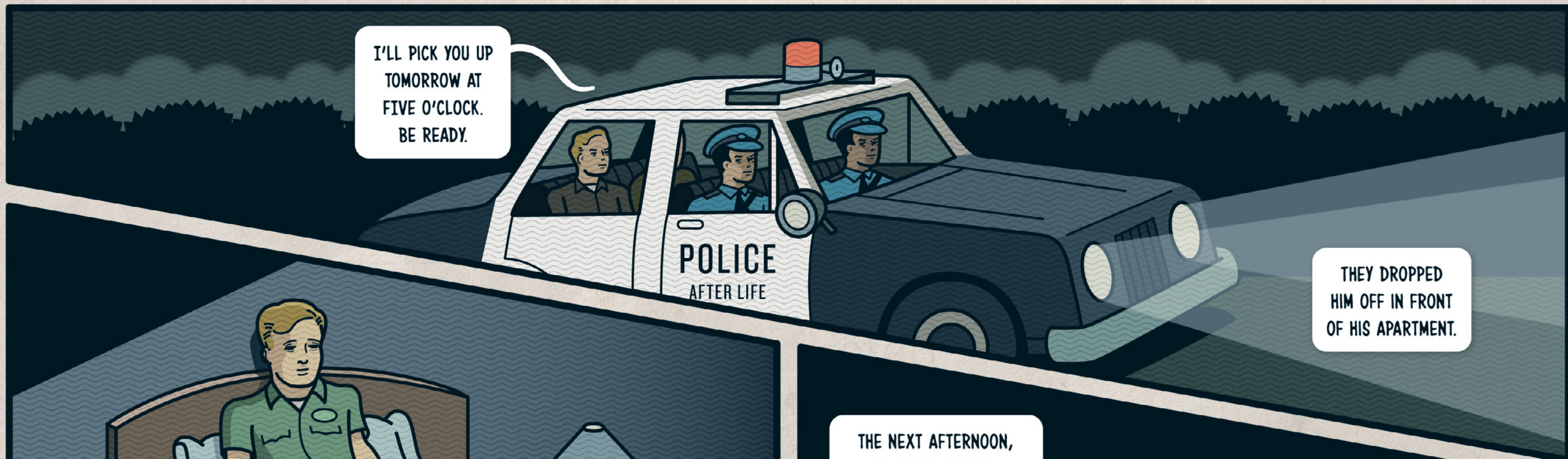


ON A HILL, THE
HOLLYWOOD SIGN
GLOWED RED
IN THE NIGHT.

HOLLYWOOD

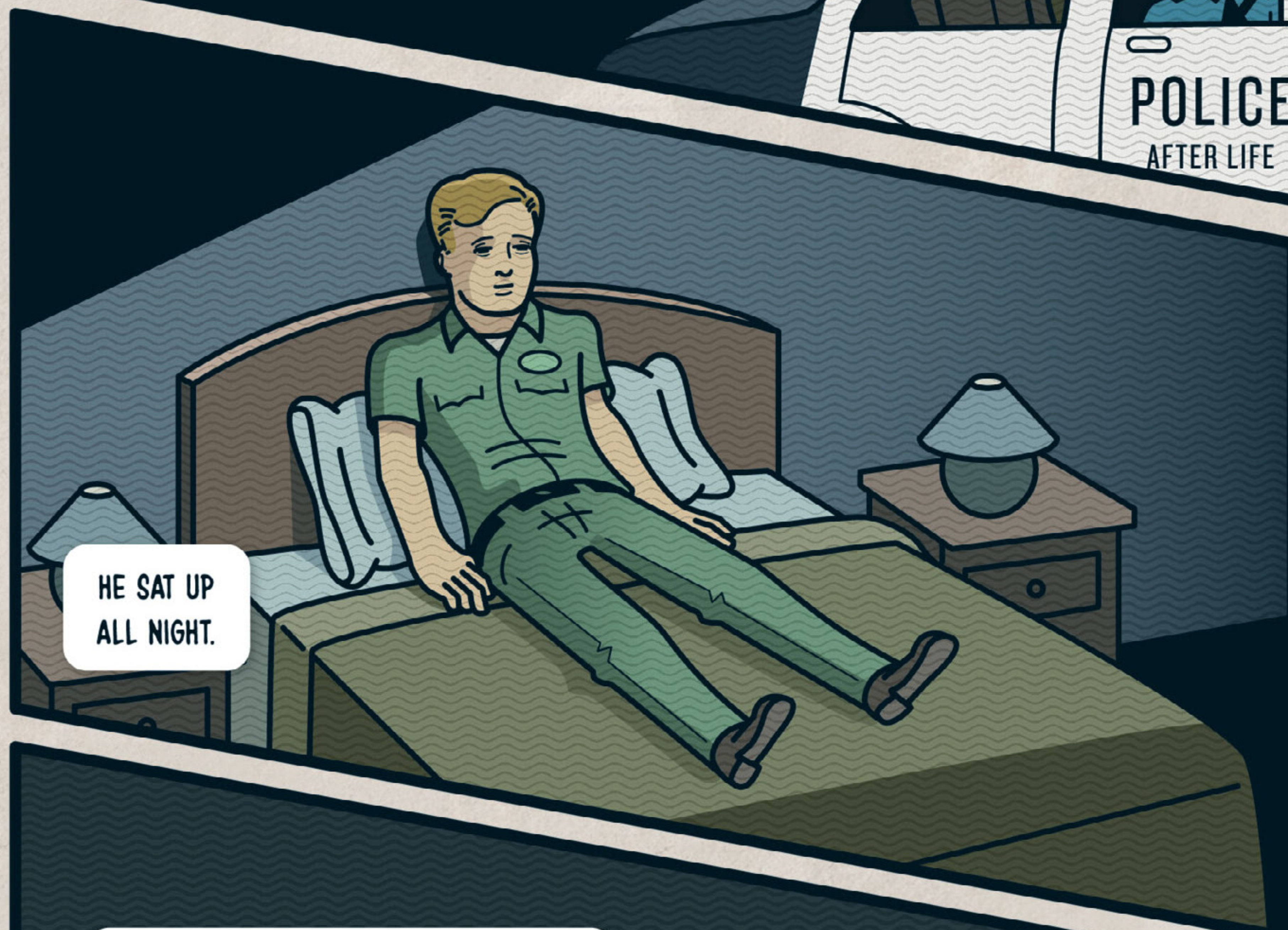


I WANT TO CONTINUE OUR ARRANGEMENT,
CONFIDENTIALLY, OF COURSE.
I'M GOING TO SEND YOU BACK TO THE
LIVING WORLD, AND YOU'LL BRING
SHADES OVER. THERE'S A WARRANT
FOR YOUR ARREST, SO YOU'LL BE KEPT
IN SOLITARY, UNDER CONSTANT WATCH.
I'LL TAKE YOU OUT AS NEEDED.
IF YOU END UP GETTING PINCHED,
IT'S INTO A JAR FOR YOU.

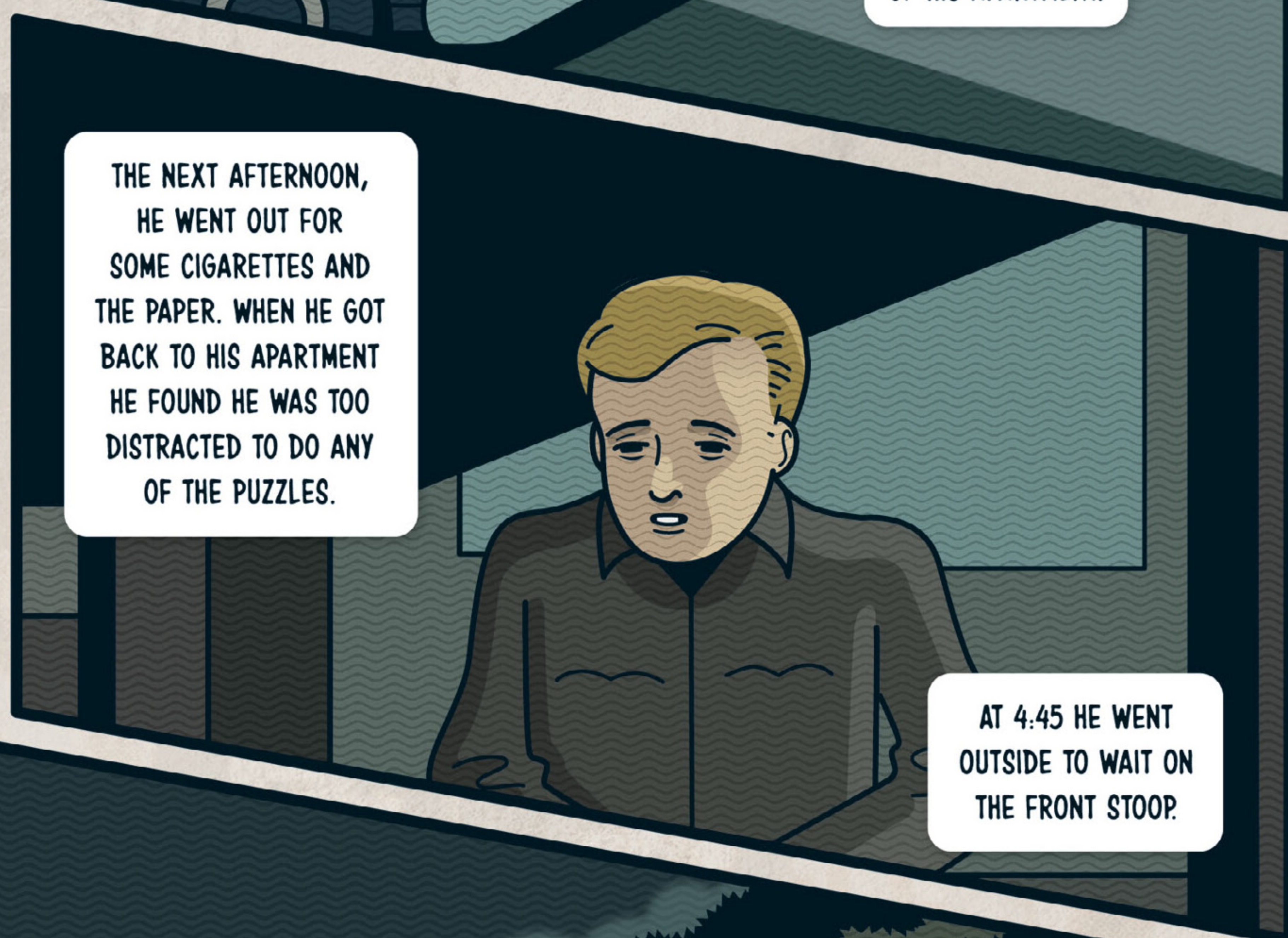


I'LL PICK YOU UP
TOMORROW AT
FIVE O'CLOCK.
BE READY.

THEY DROPPED
HIM OFF IN FRONT
OF HIS APARTMENT.

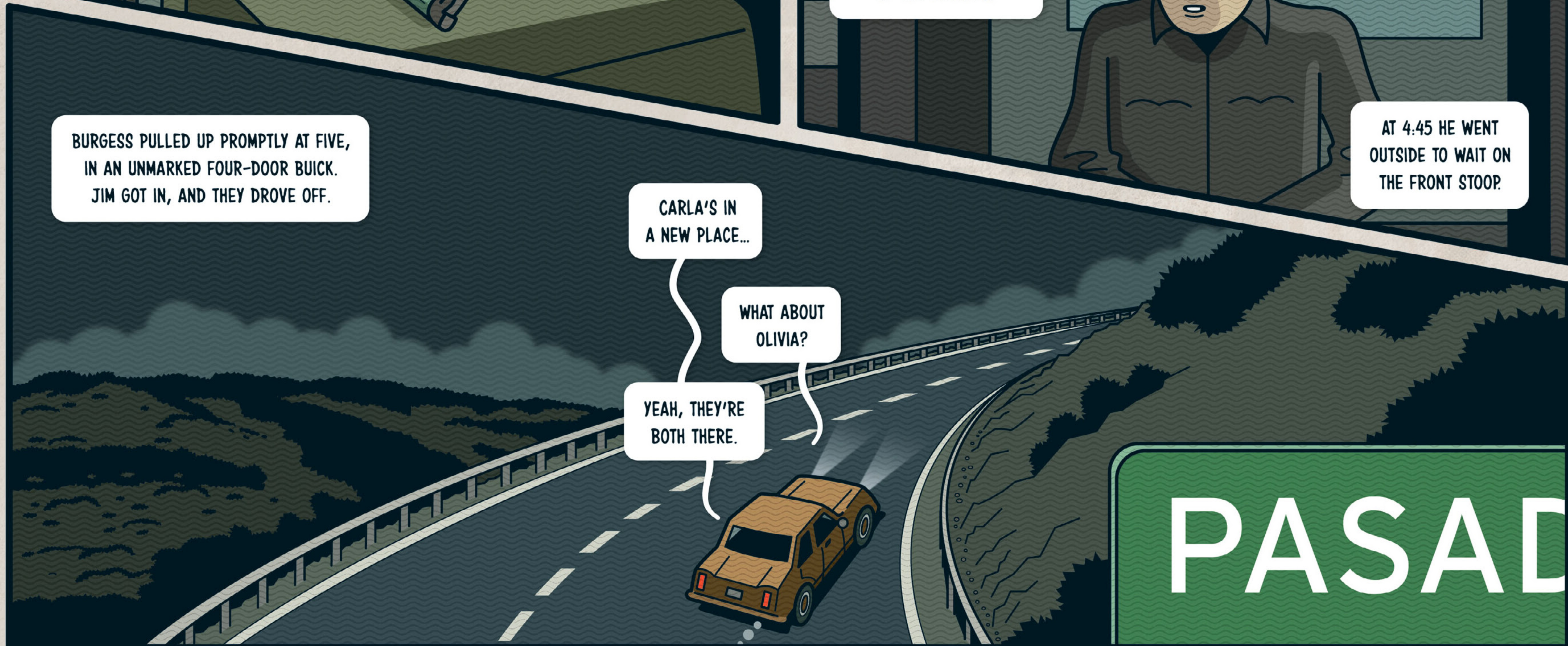


HE SAT UP
ALL NIGHT.



THE NEXT AFTERNOON,
HE WENT OUT FOR
SOME CIGARETTES AND
THE PAPER. WHEN HE GOT
BACK TO HIS APARTMENT
HE FOUND HE WAS TOO
DISTRACTED TO DO ANY
OF THE PUZZLES.

AT 4:45 HE WENT
OUTSIDE TO WAIT ON
THE FRONT STOOP.



BURGESS PULLED UP PROMPTLY AT FIVE,
IN AN UNMARKED FOUR-DOOR BUICK.
JIM GOT IN, AND THEY DROVE OFF.

CARLA'S IN
A NEW PLACE...

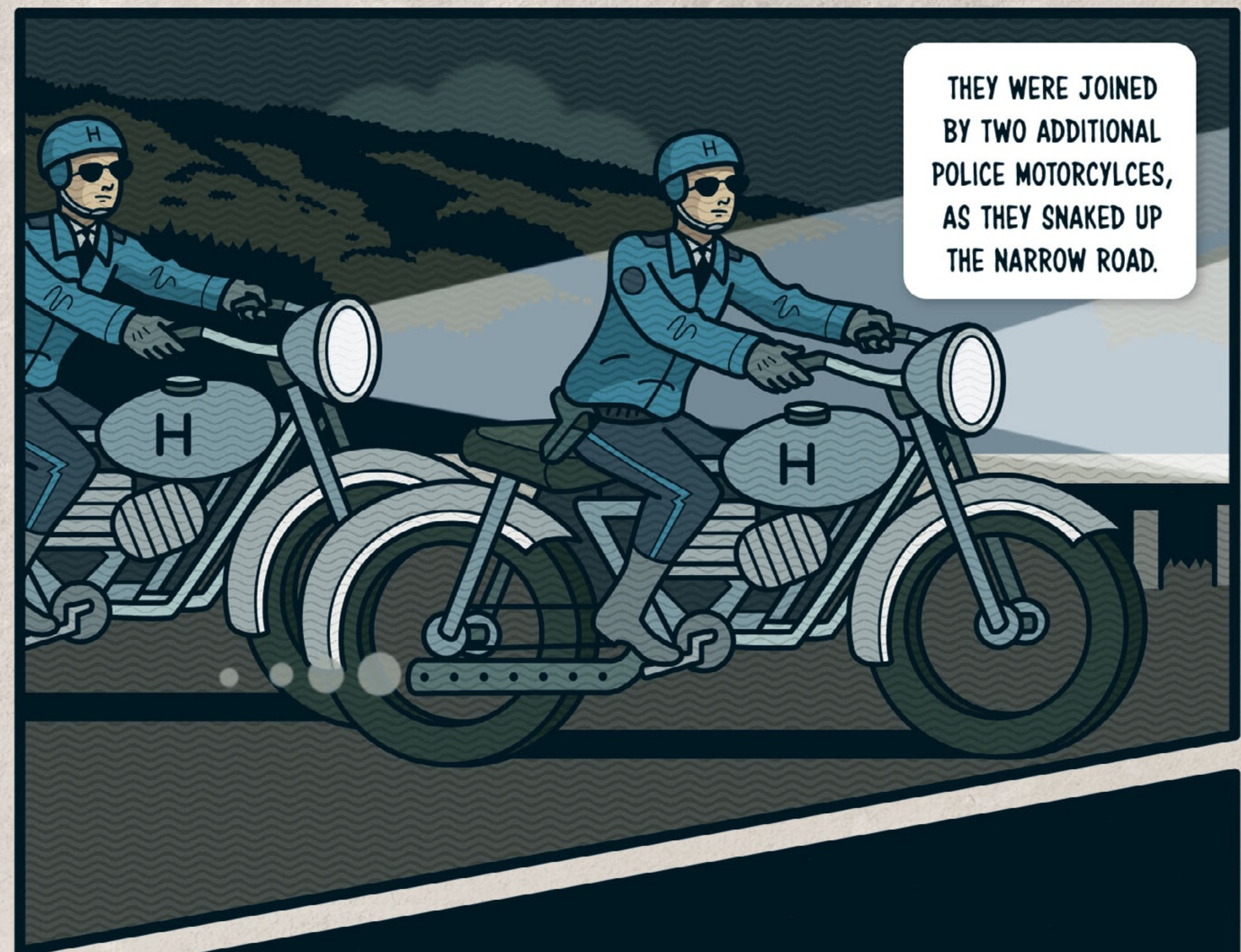
WHAT ABOUT
OLIVIA?

YEAH, THEY'RE
BOTH THERE.

PASAD

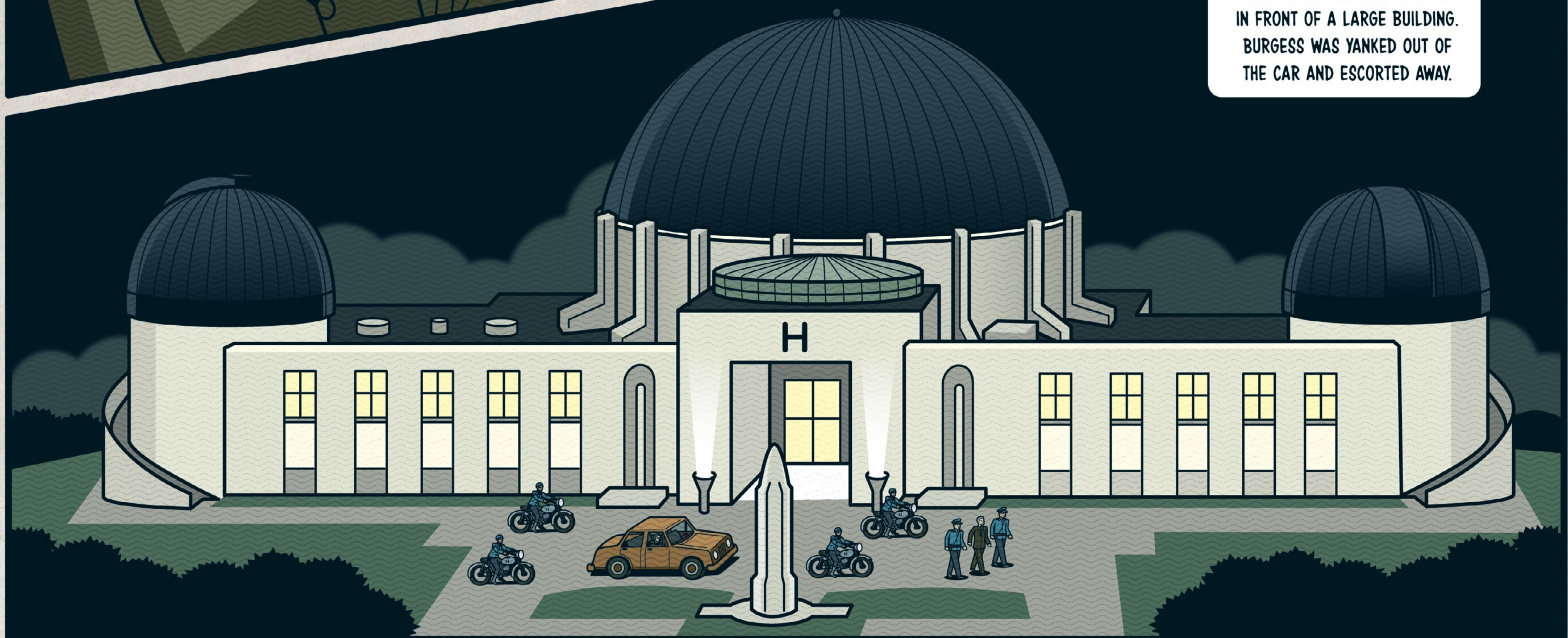
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE
GOING ON AN
UNEXPECTED DRIVE.

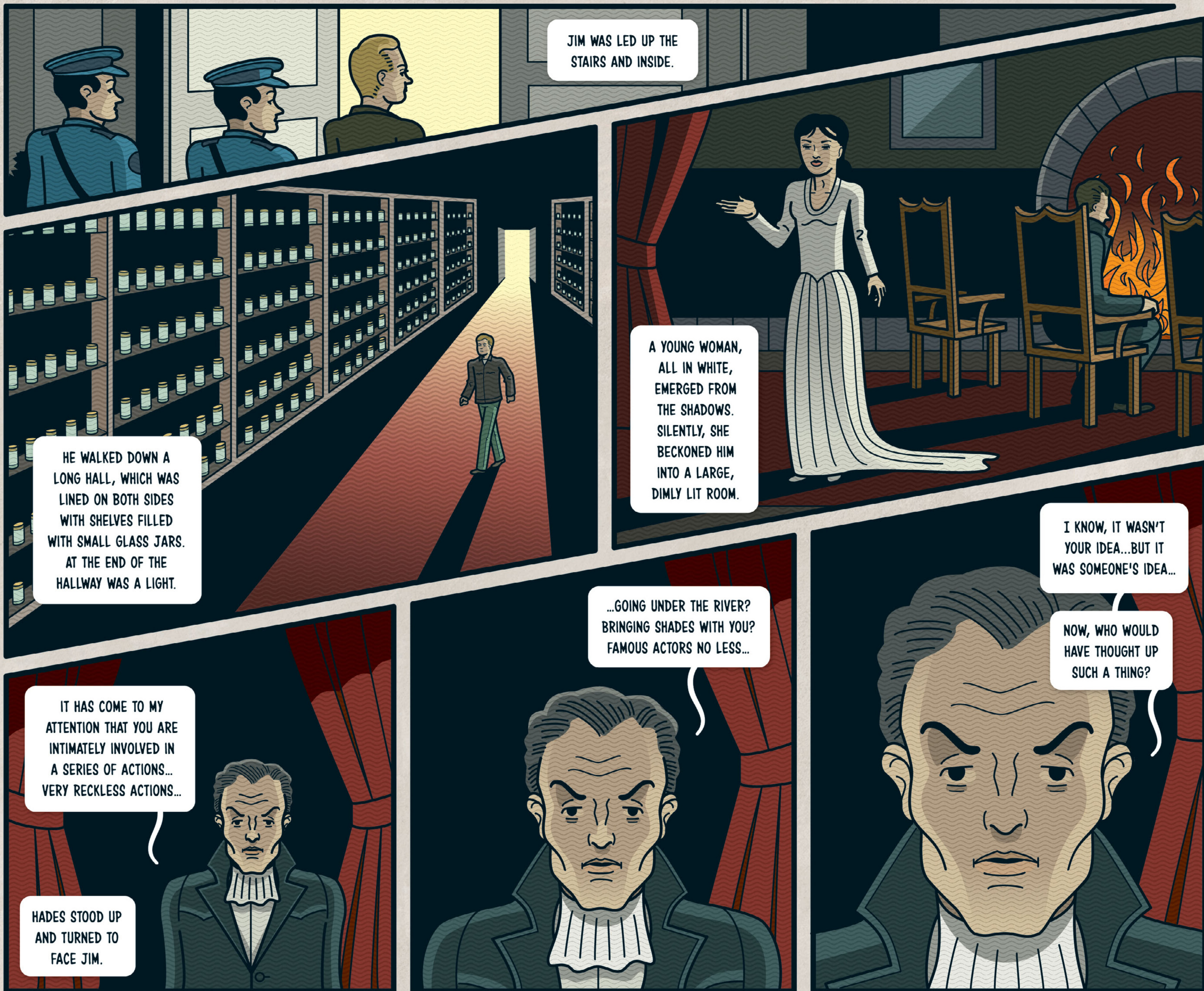
TWO MOTORCYCLE COPS
PULLED UP ON EITHER
SIDE OF THE CAR. THEY
MOTIONED FOR BURGESS
TO FOLLOW THEM.



THEY WERE JOINED
BY TWO ADDITIONAL
POLICE MOTORCYCLES,
AS THEY SNAKED UP
THE NARROW ROAD.

THEY WERE DIRECTED TO PARK
IN FRONT OF A LARGE BUILDING.
BURGESS WAS YANKED OUT OF
THE CAR AND ESCORTED AWAY.





JIM WAS LED UP THE STAIRS AND INSIDE.

HE WALKED DOWN A LONG HALL, WHICH WAS LINED ON BOTH SIDES WITH SHELVES FILLED WITH SMALL GLASS JARS. AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY WAS A LIGHT.

A YOUNG WOMAN, ALL IN WHITE, EMERGED FROM THE SHADOWS. SILENTLY, SHE BECKONED HIM INTO A LARGE, DIMLY LIT ROOM.

IT HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT YOU ARE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN A SERIES OF ACTIONS... VERY RECKLESS ACTIONS...

HADES STOOD UP AND TURNED TO FACE JIM.

...GOING UNDER THE RIVER? BRINGING SHADES WITH YOU? FAMOUS ACTORS NO LESS...

I KNOW, IT WASN'T YOUR IDEA...BUT IT WAS SOMEONE'S IDEA...

NOW, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT UP SUCH A THING?



I'LL TELL YOU WHO...
THE KIND OF PERSON
WHO THINKS THEY CAN
DECEIVE ME. ME!
HADES! THE RULER OF
THE UNDERWORLD.

HE REACHED
INTO HIS
COAT POCKET
AND TOOK
OUT A
SMALL JAR.



SAY HELLO TO LIEUTENANT BURGESS.
A SIMPLE MAN WITH A SIMPLE PLAN.



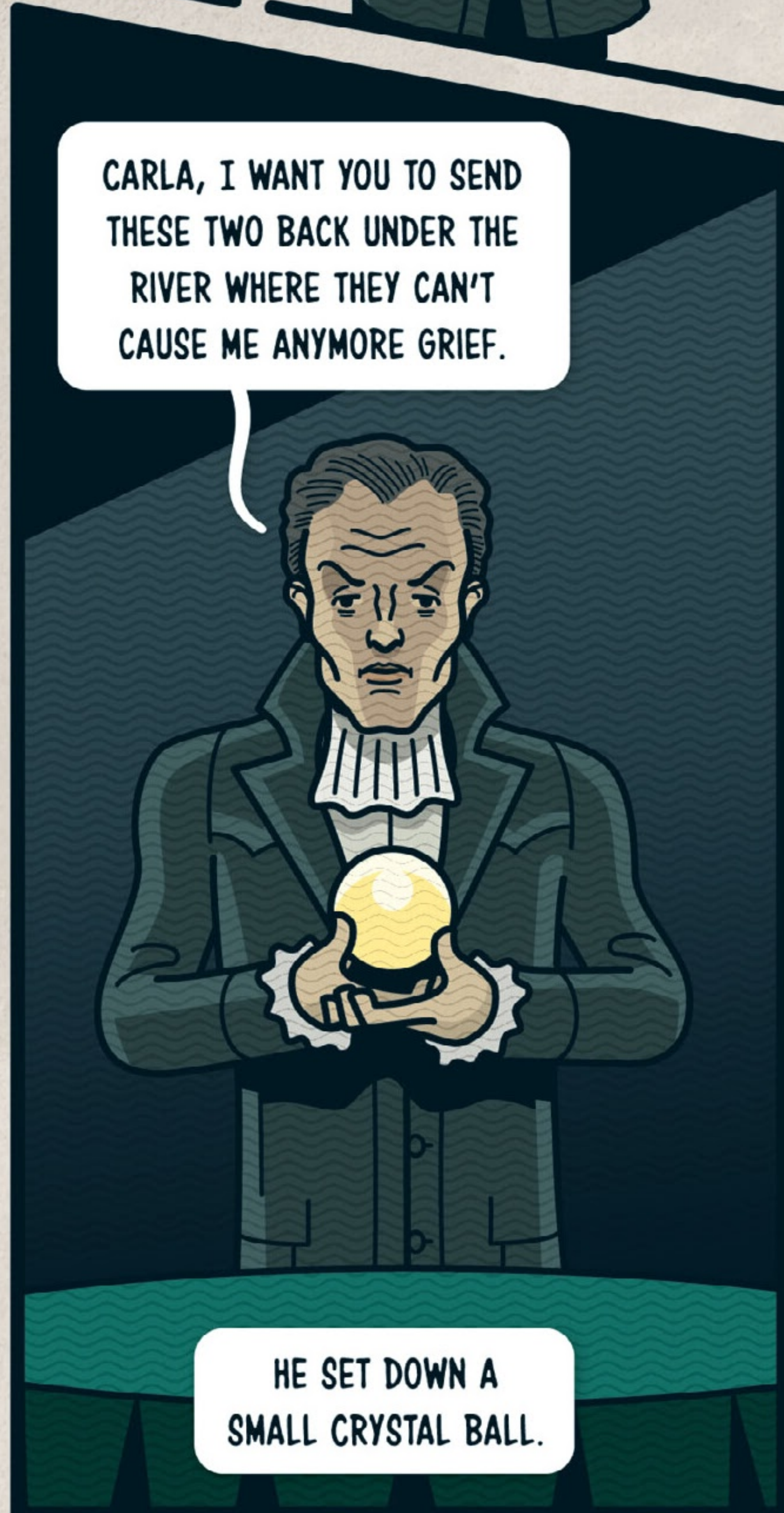
HE LIFTED UP A COIN AND
TURNED IT IN HIS HAND.

COPS AND
CRIMINALS,
TWO SIDES
OF THE
SAME COIN.



BUT YOU AND THIS YOUNG WOMAN
WERE *ALSO* INVOLVED IN THIS.
WHAT SHALL I DO WITH YOU?

OLIVIA AND CARLA
STOOD BESIDE HADES.
THEY LOOKED SCARED.

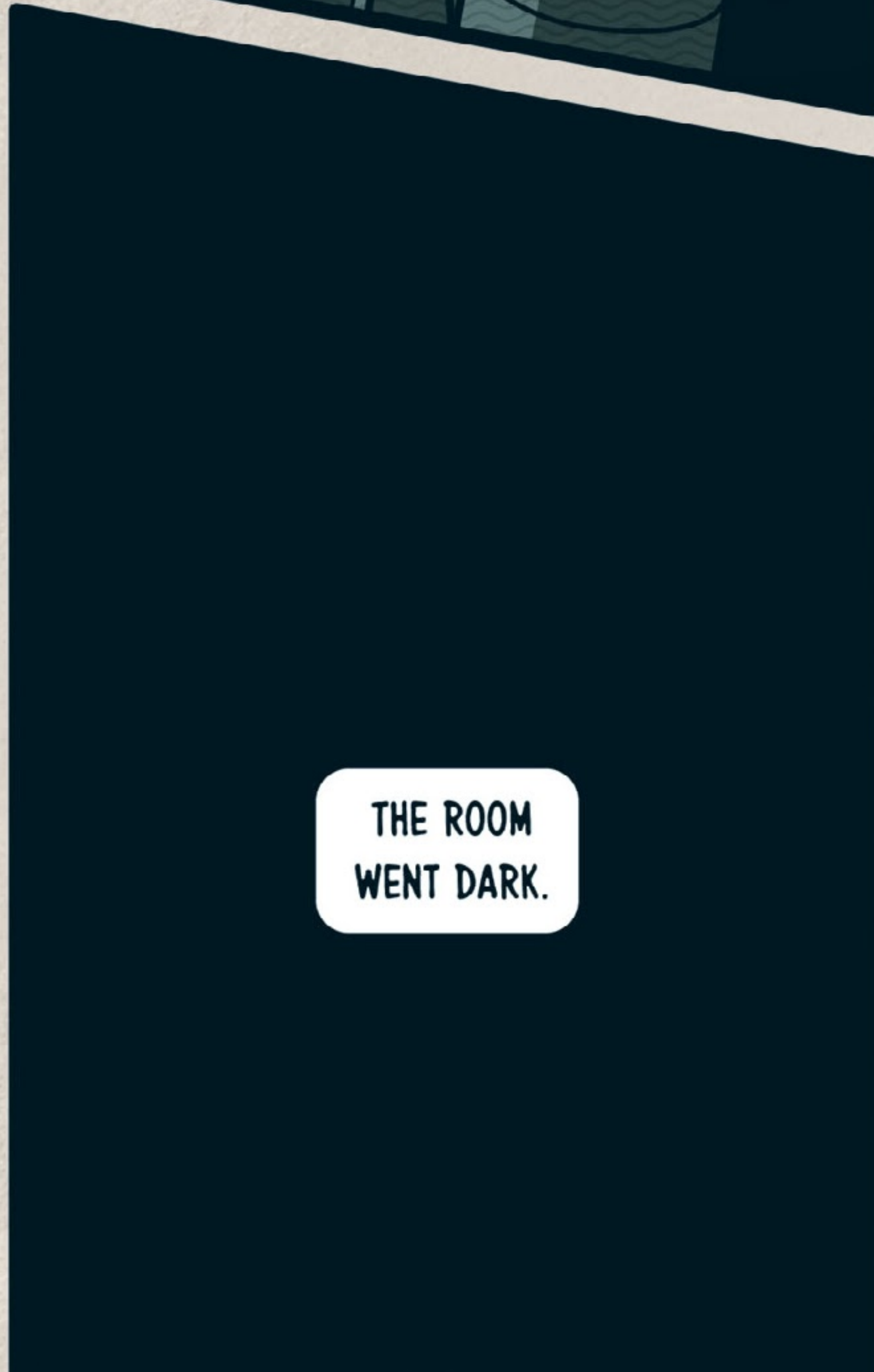


CARLA, I WANT YOU TO SEND
THESE TWO BACK UNDER THE
RIVER WHERE THEY CAN'T
CAUSE ME ANYMORE GRIEF.

HE SET DOWN A
SMALL CRYSTAL BALL.



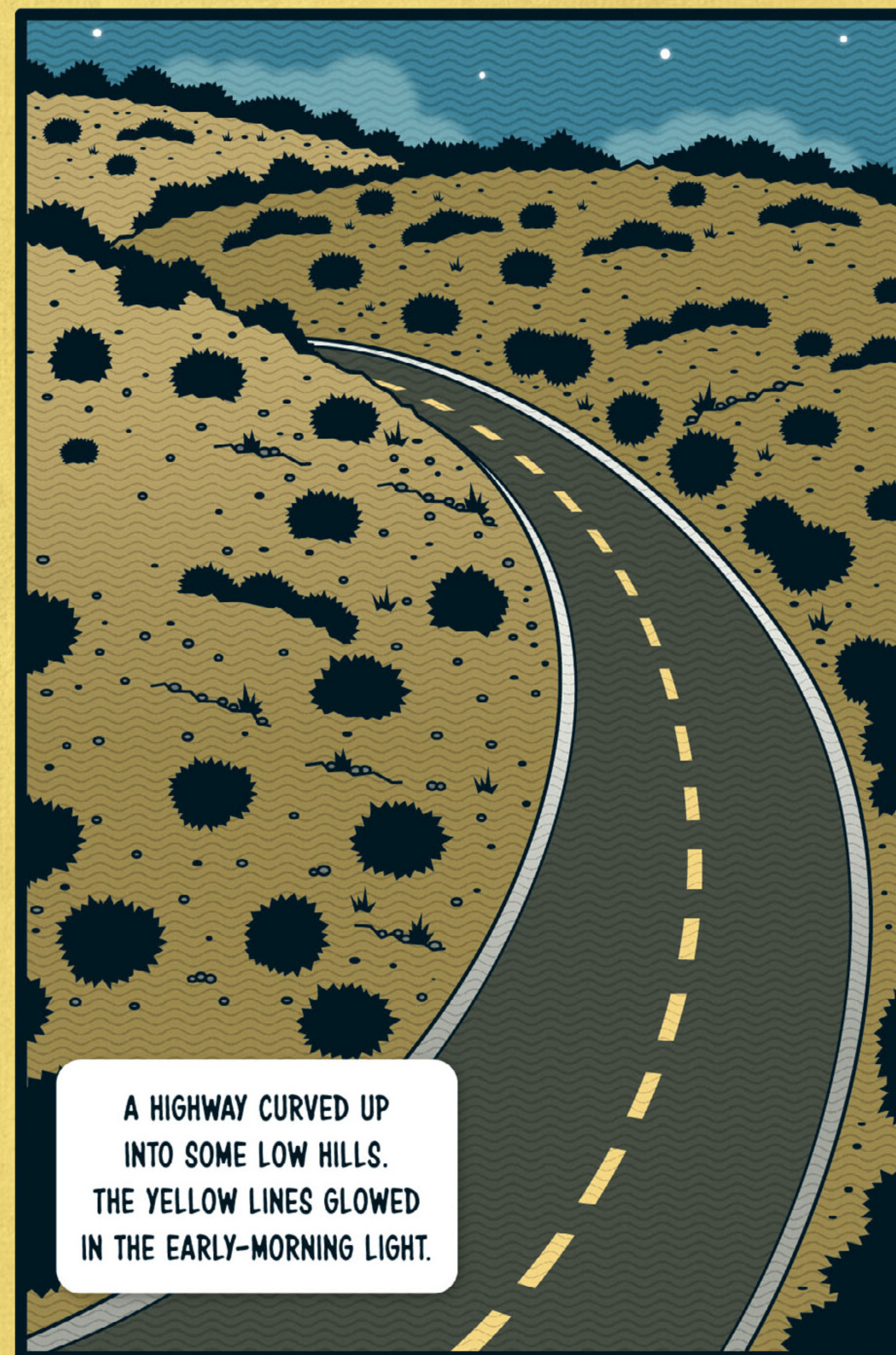
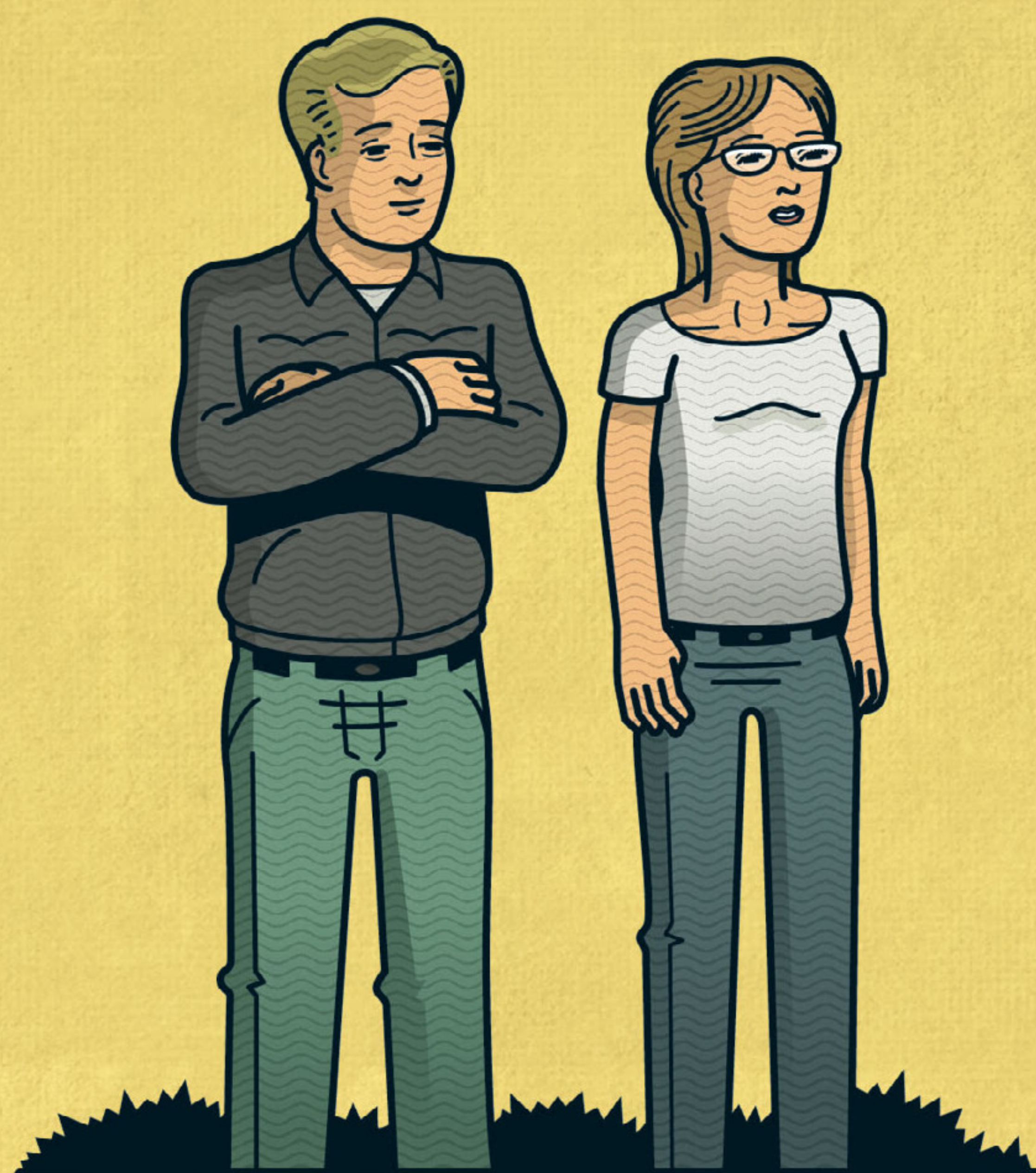
CARLA QUICKLY NODDED HER HEAD.
THE FOUR OF THEM JOINED HANDS,
AND SHE BEGAN HER INCANTATIONS.

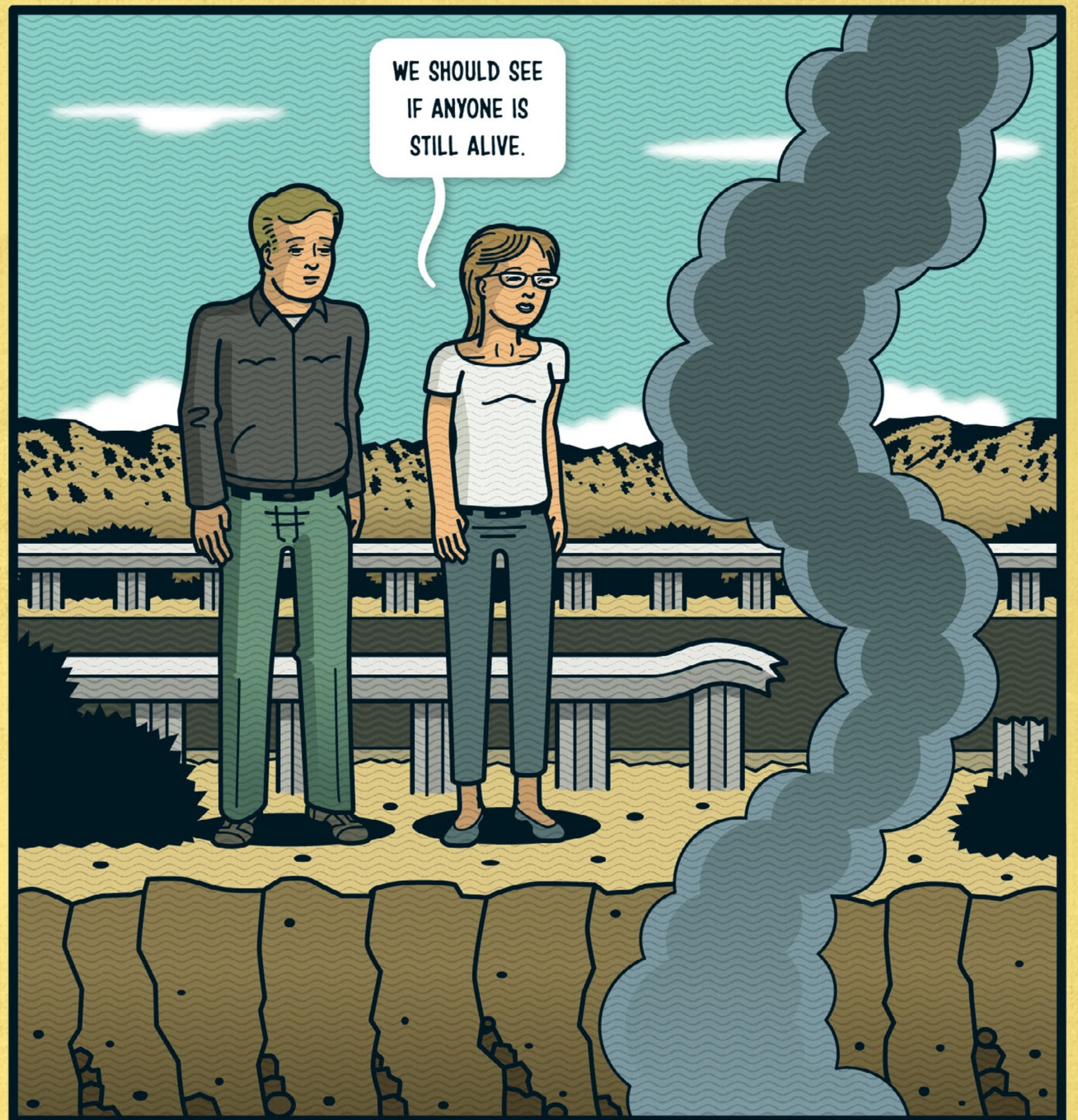
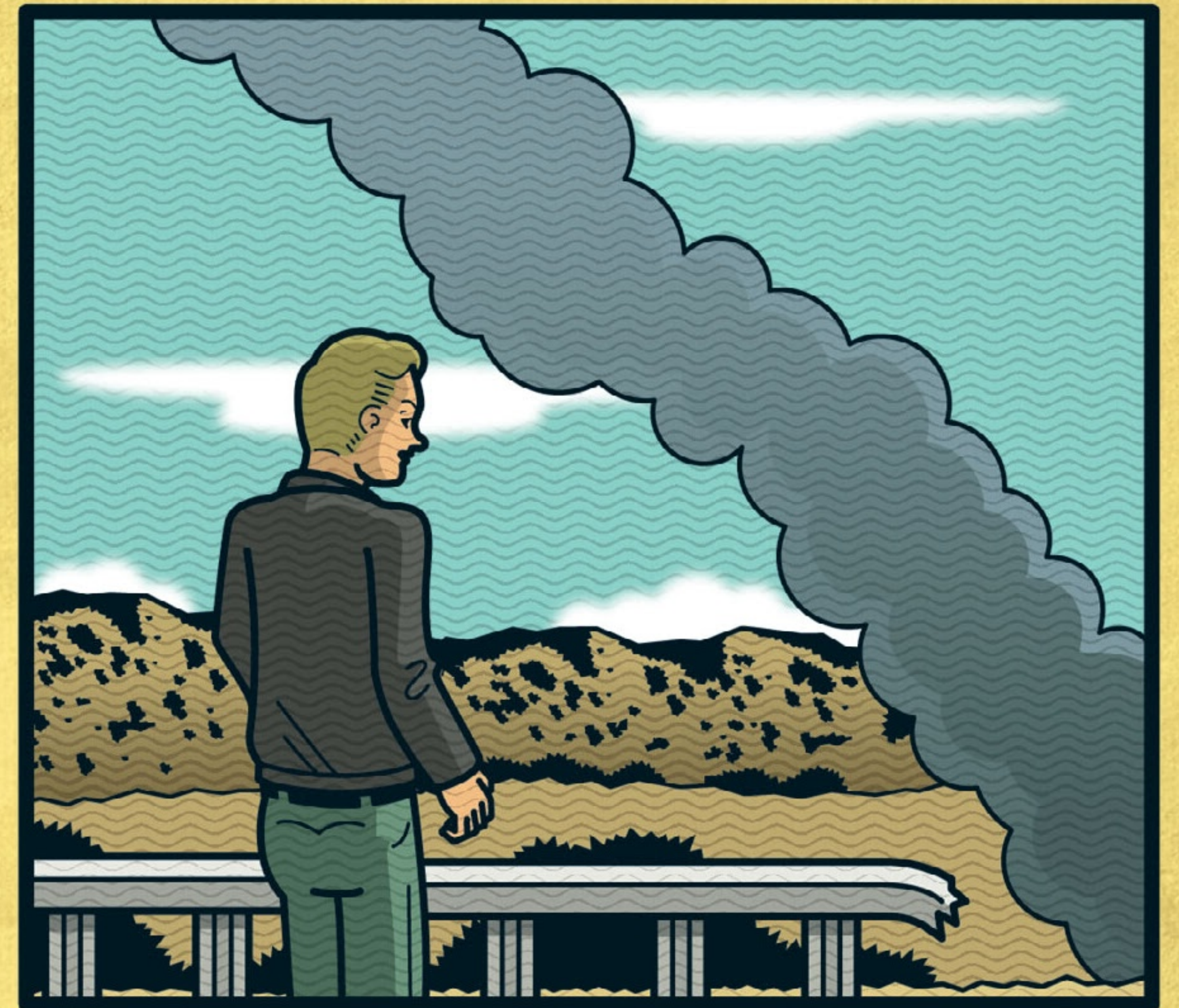
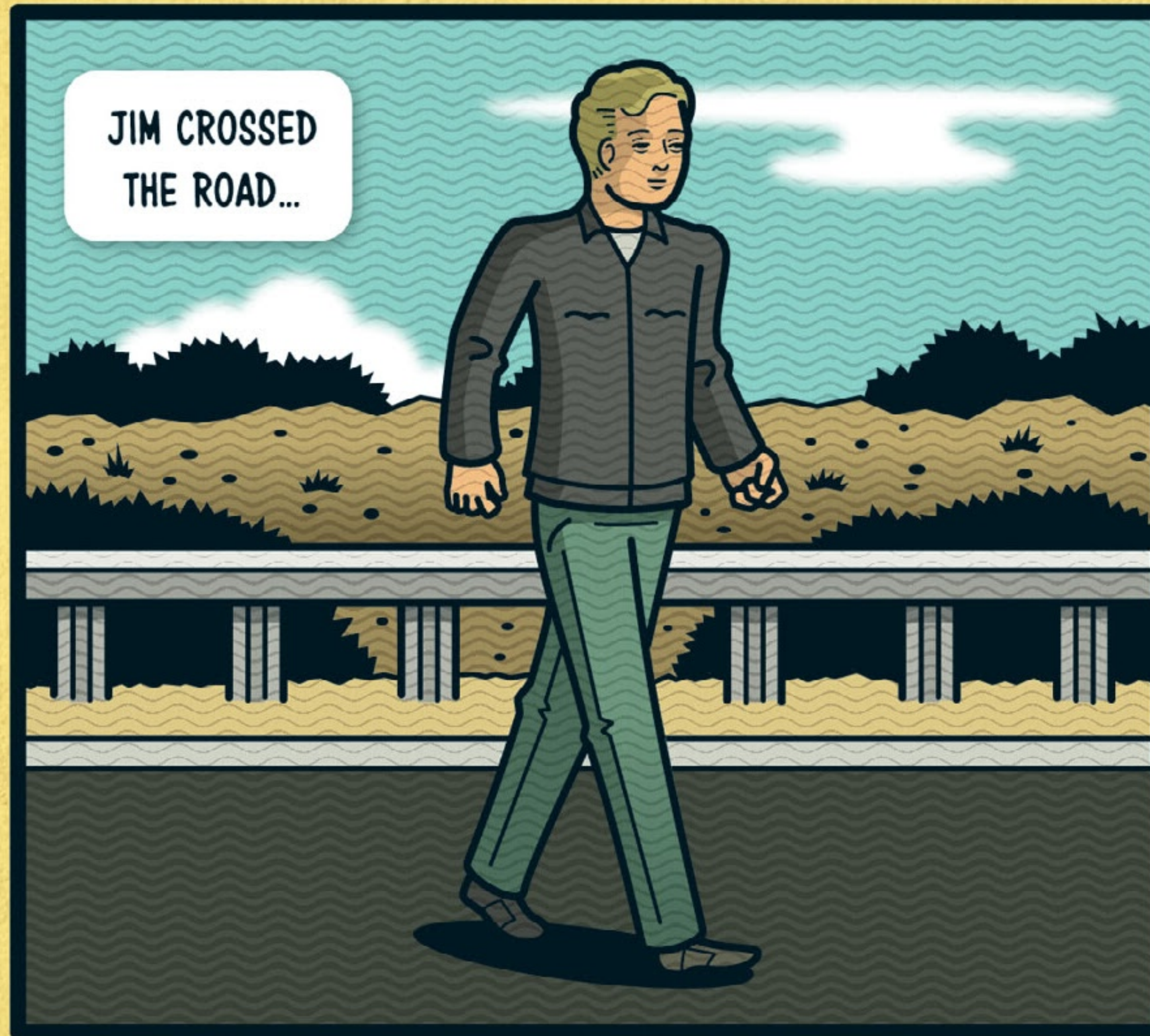
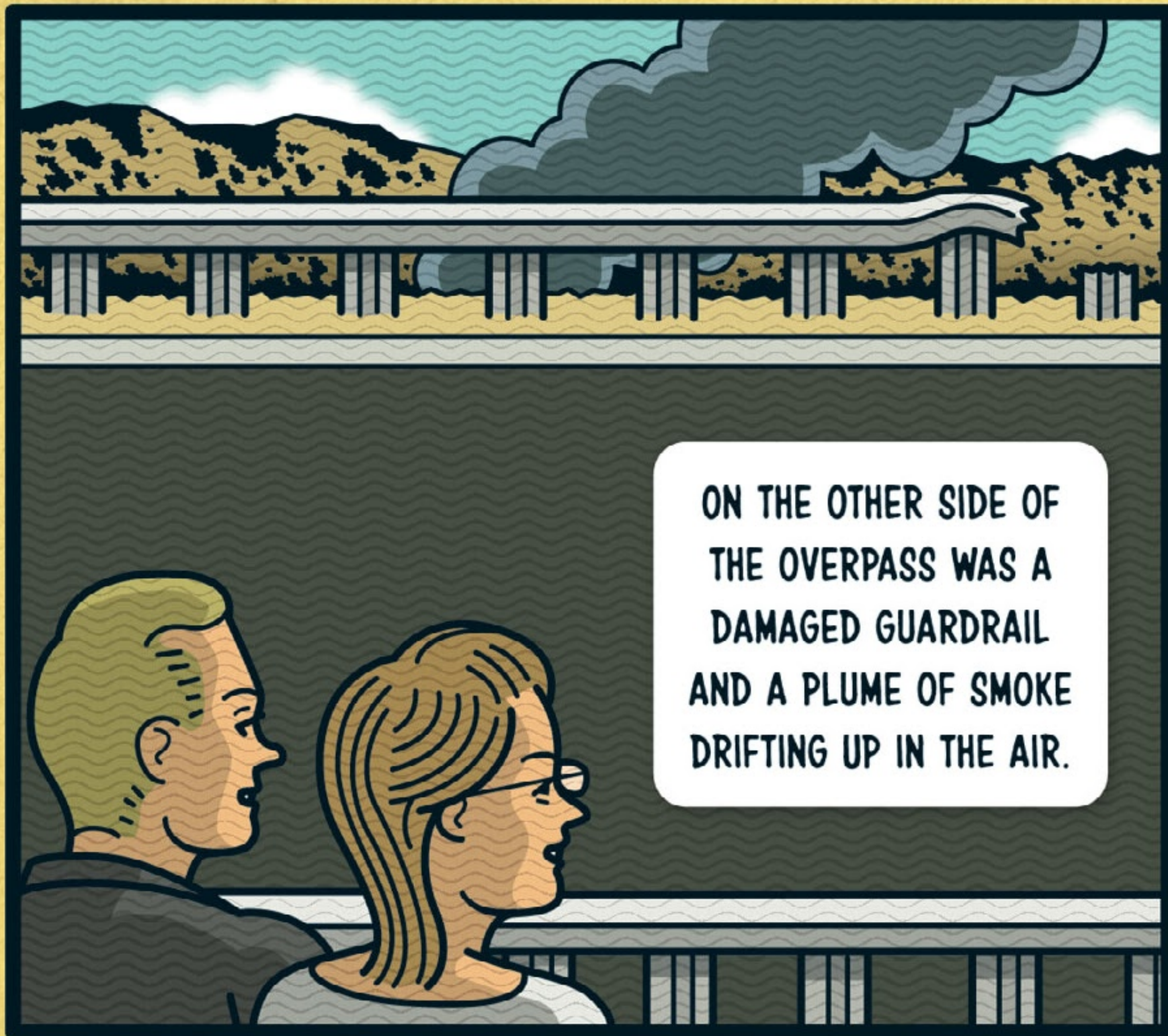


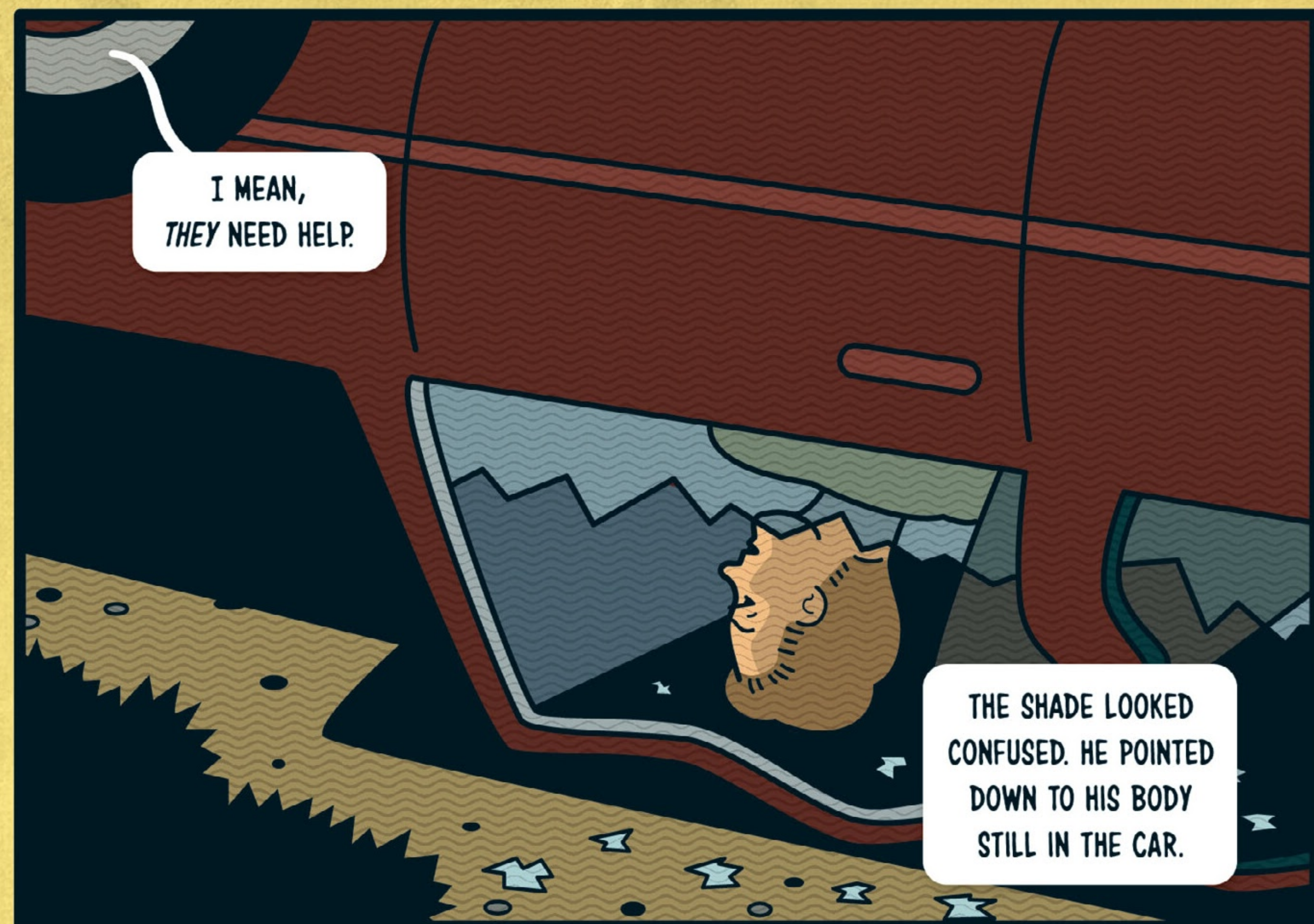
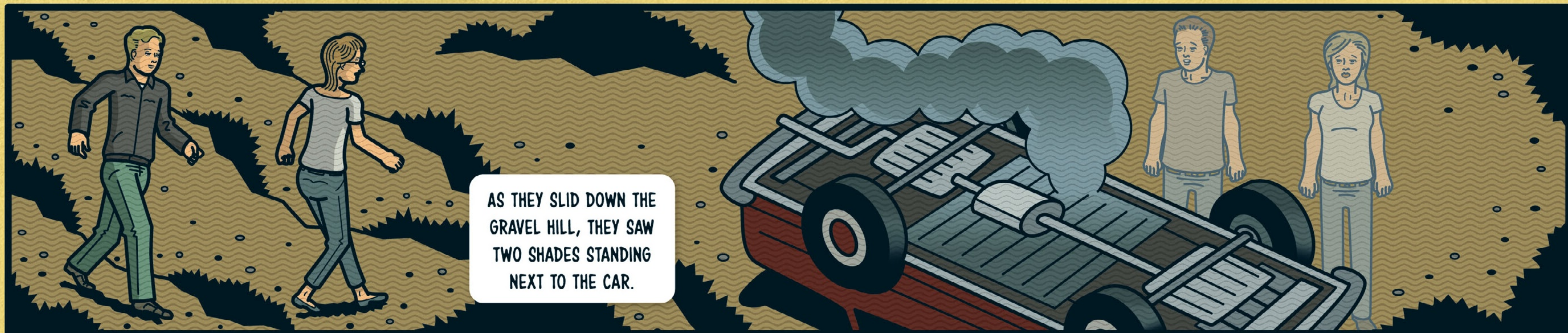
THE ROOM
WENT DARK.

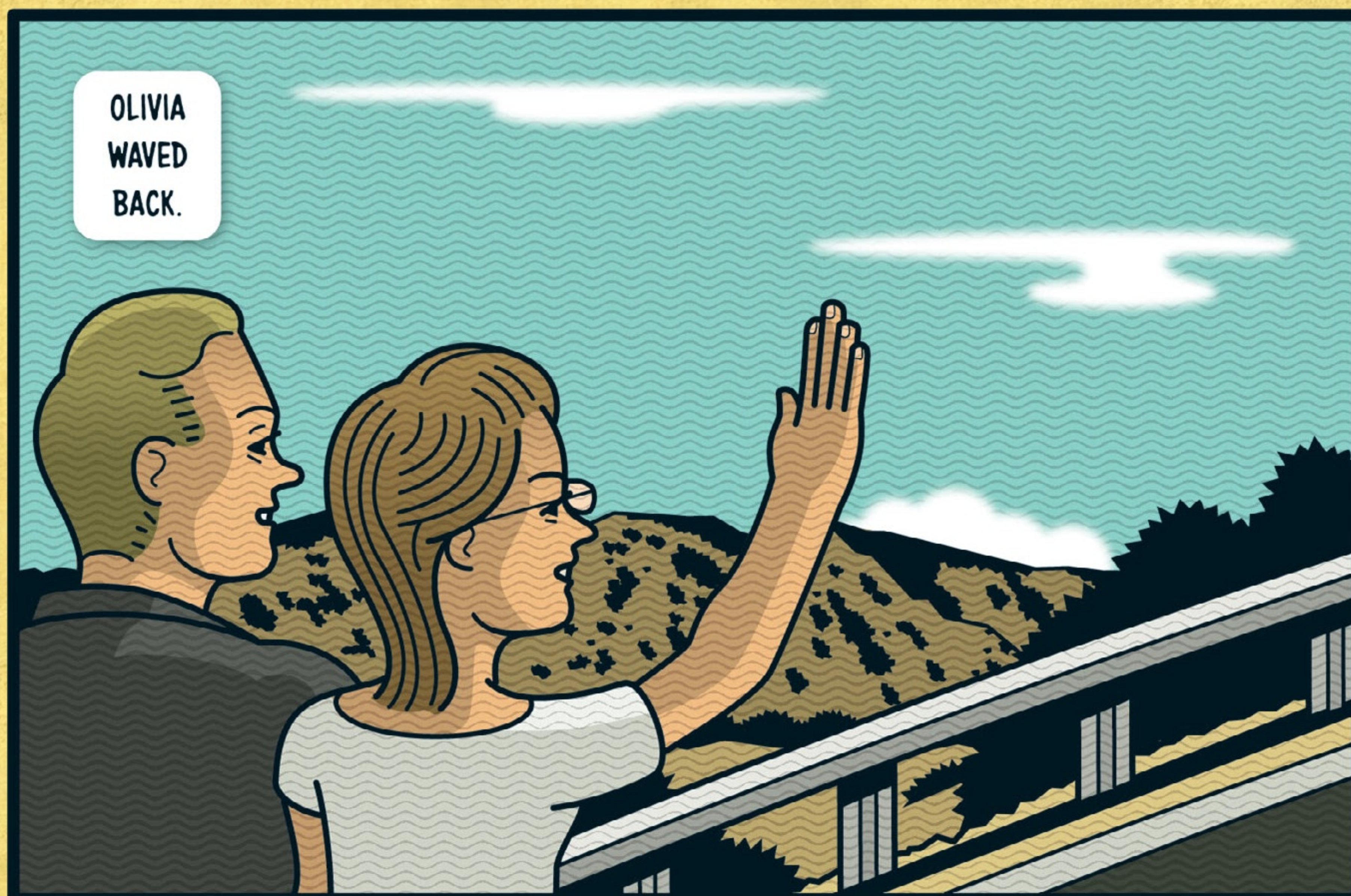
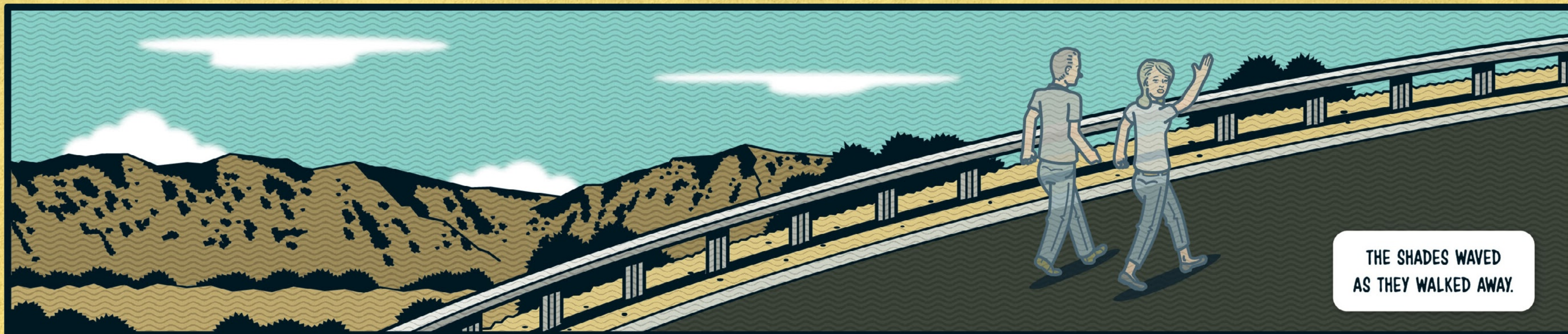
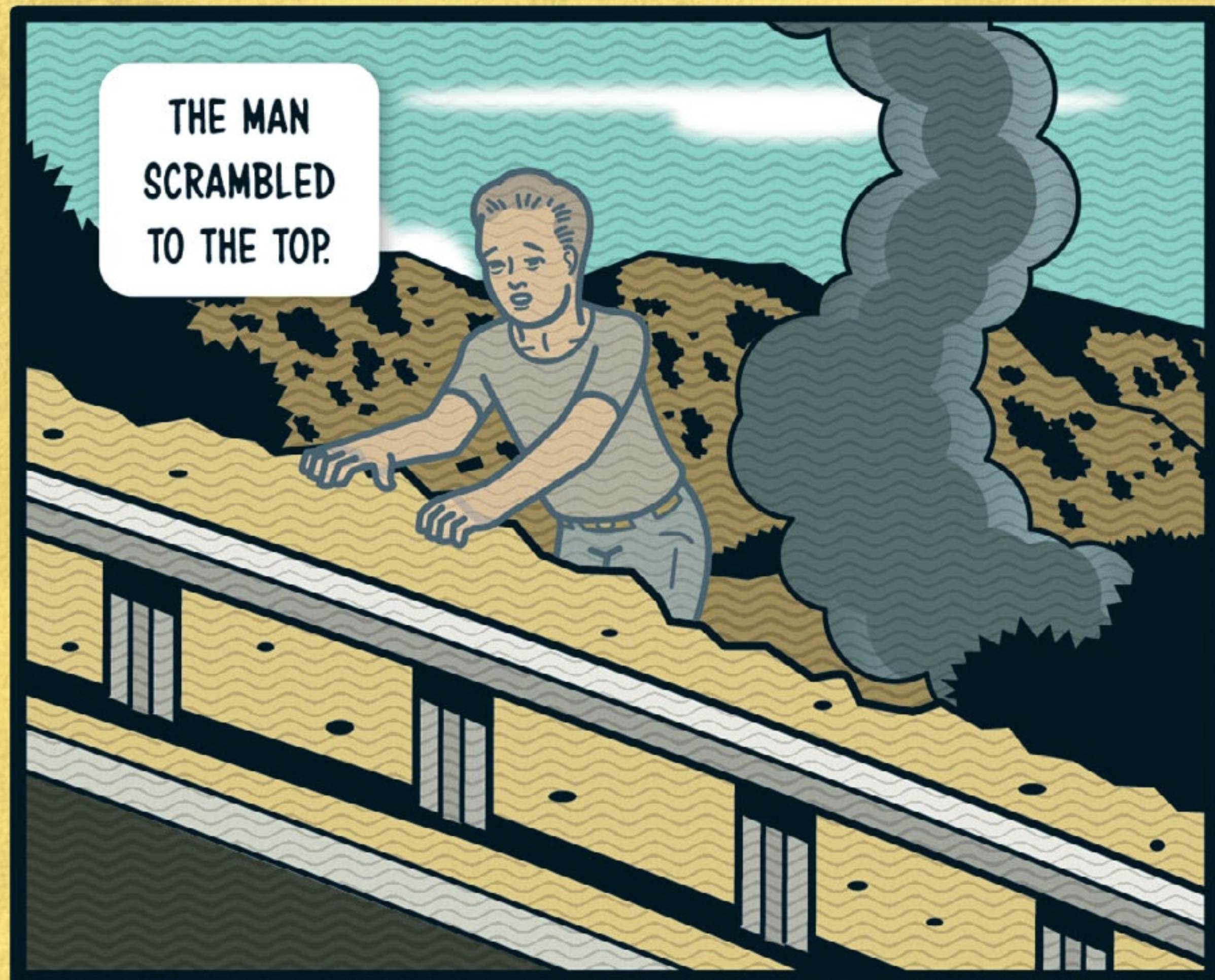


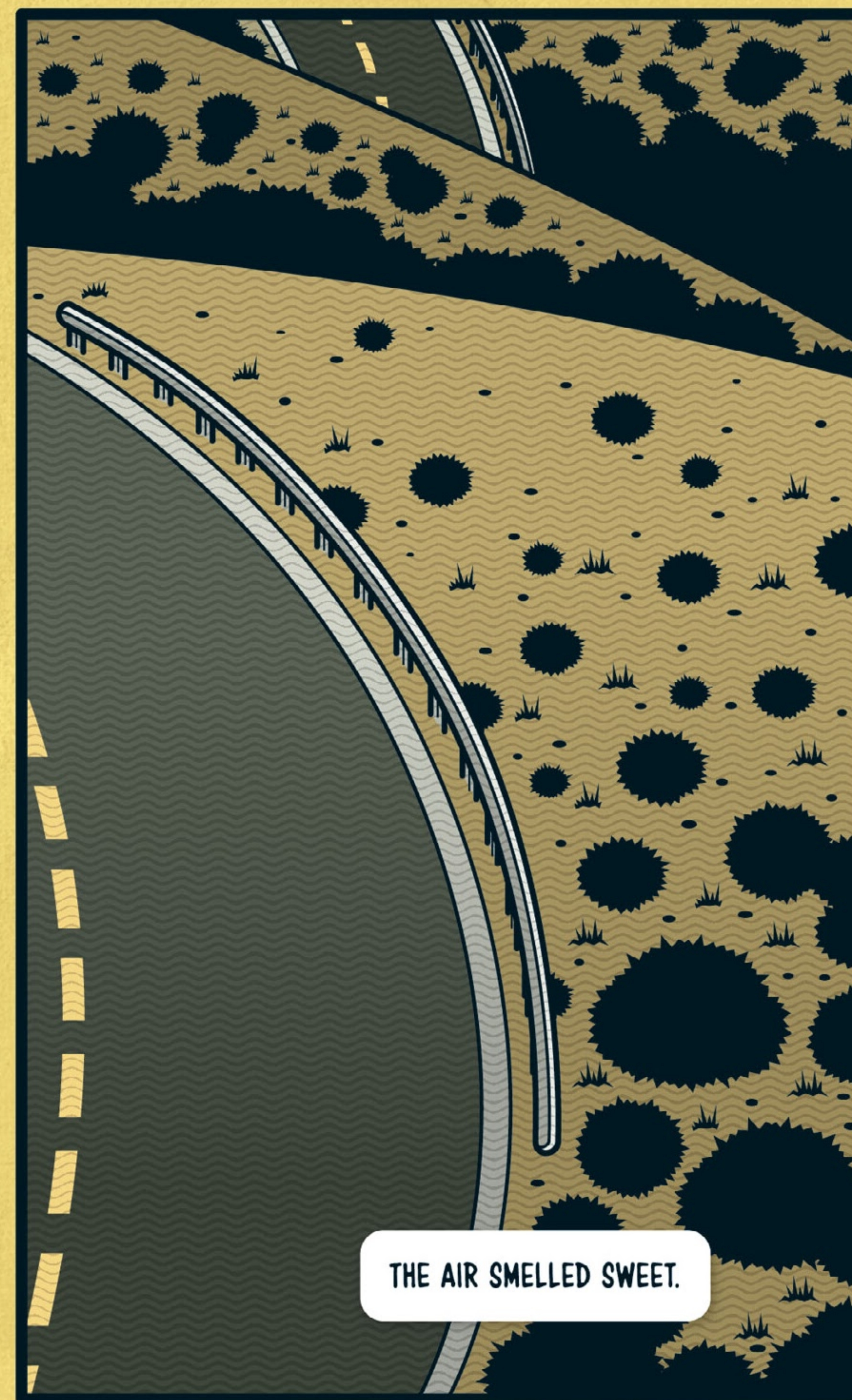
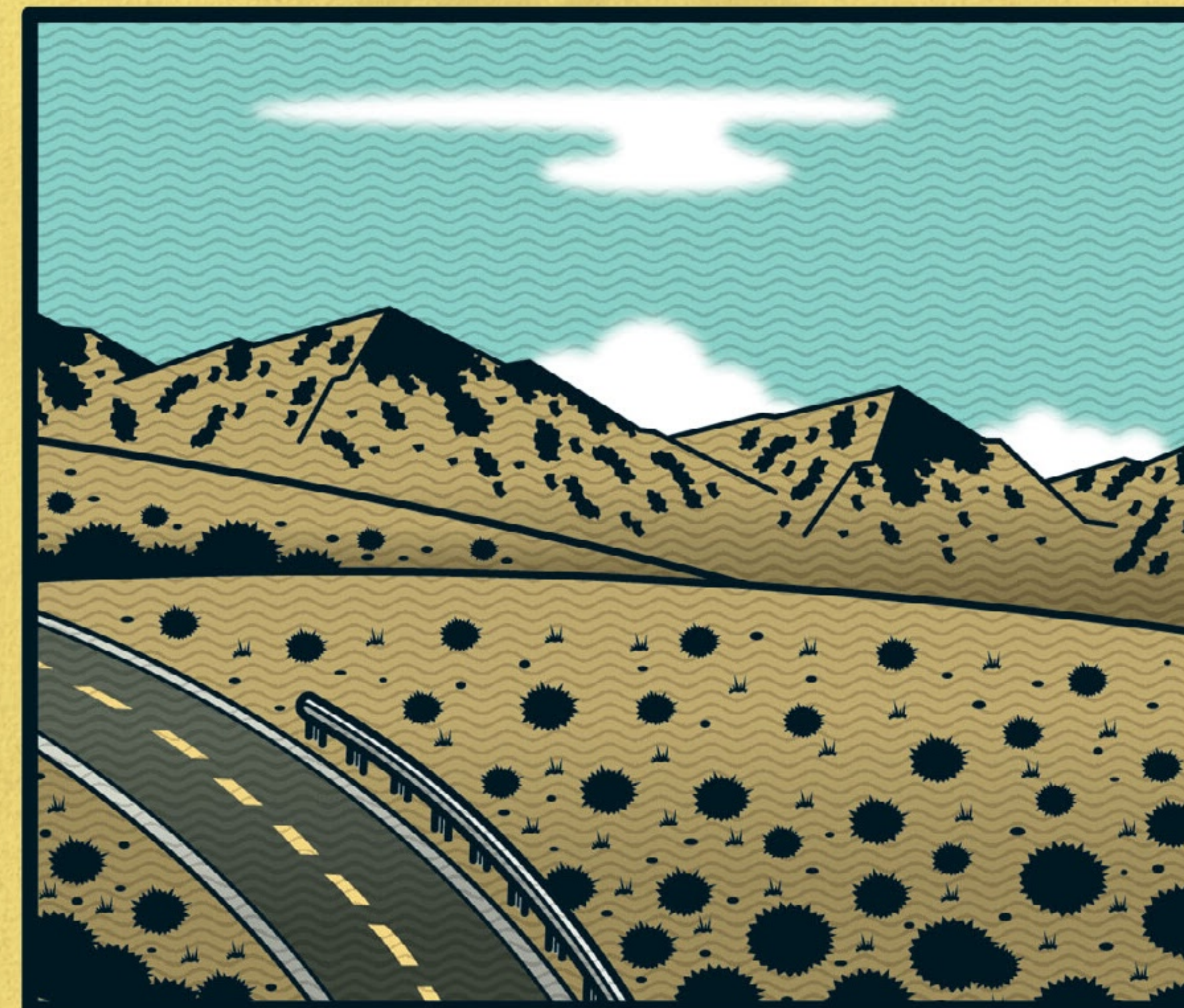
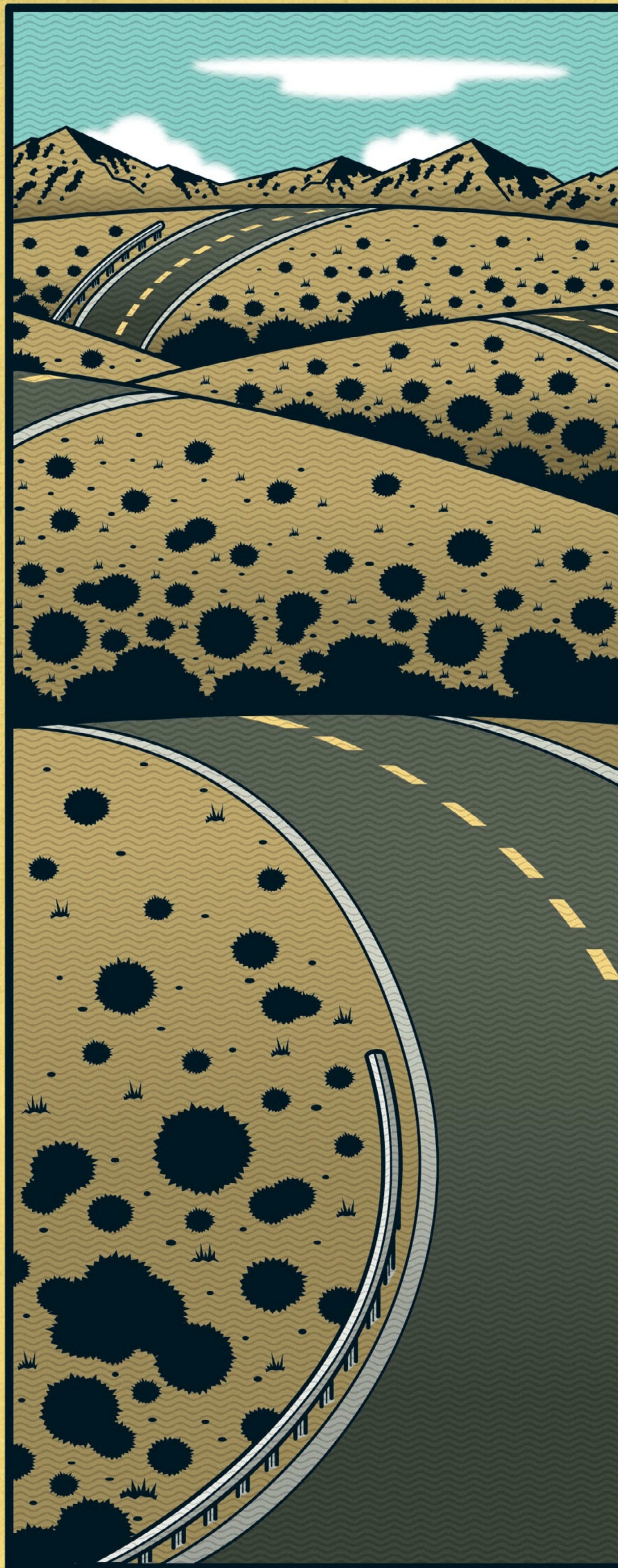
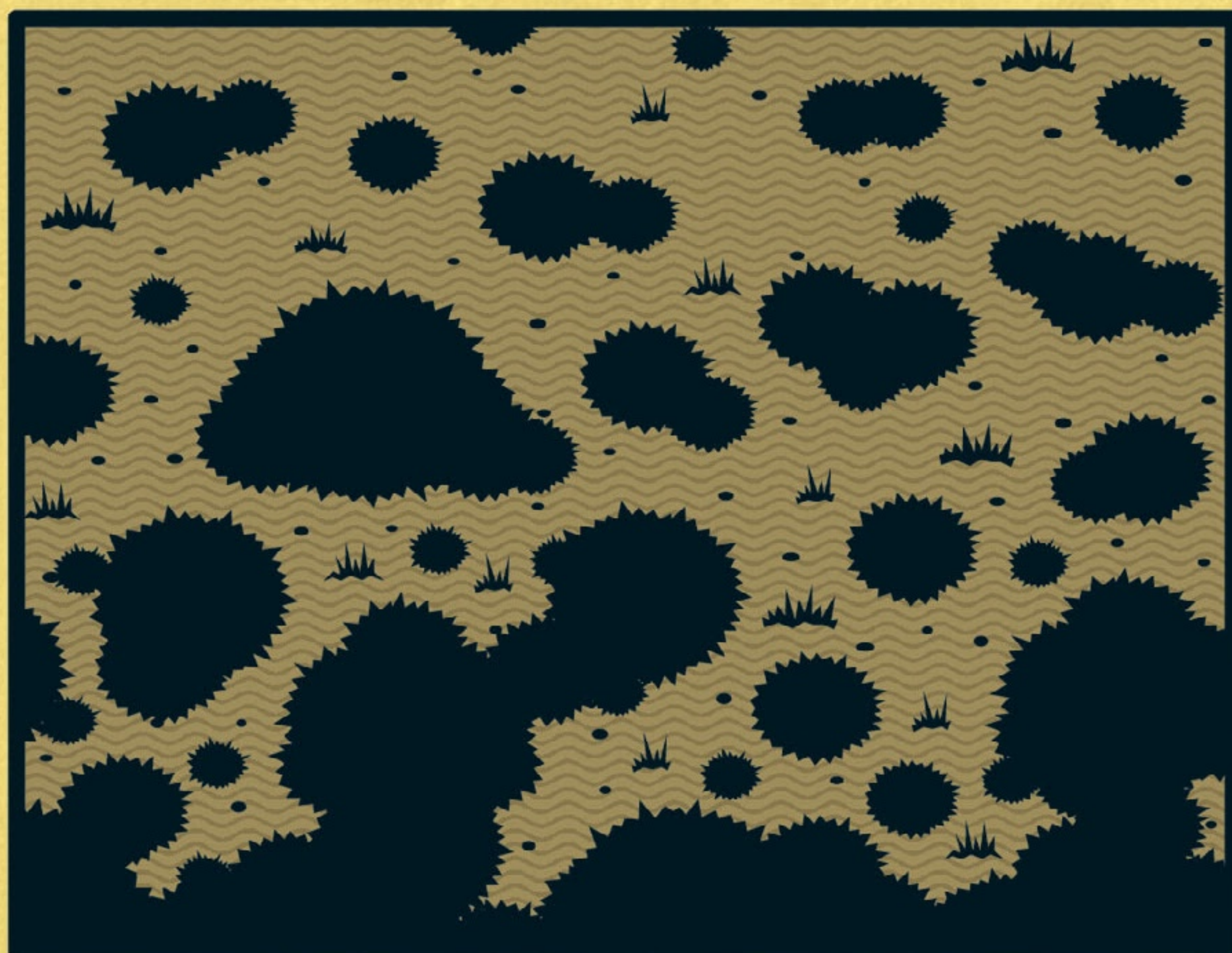
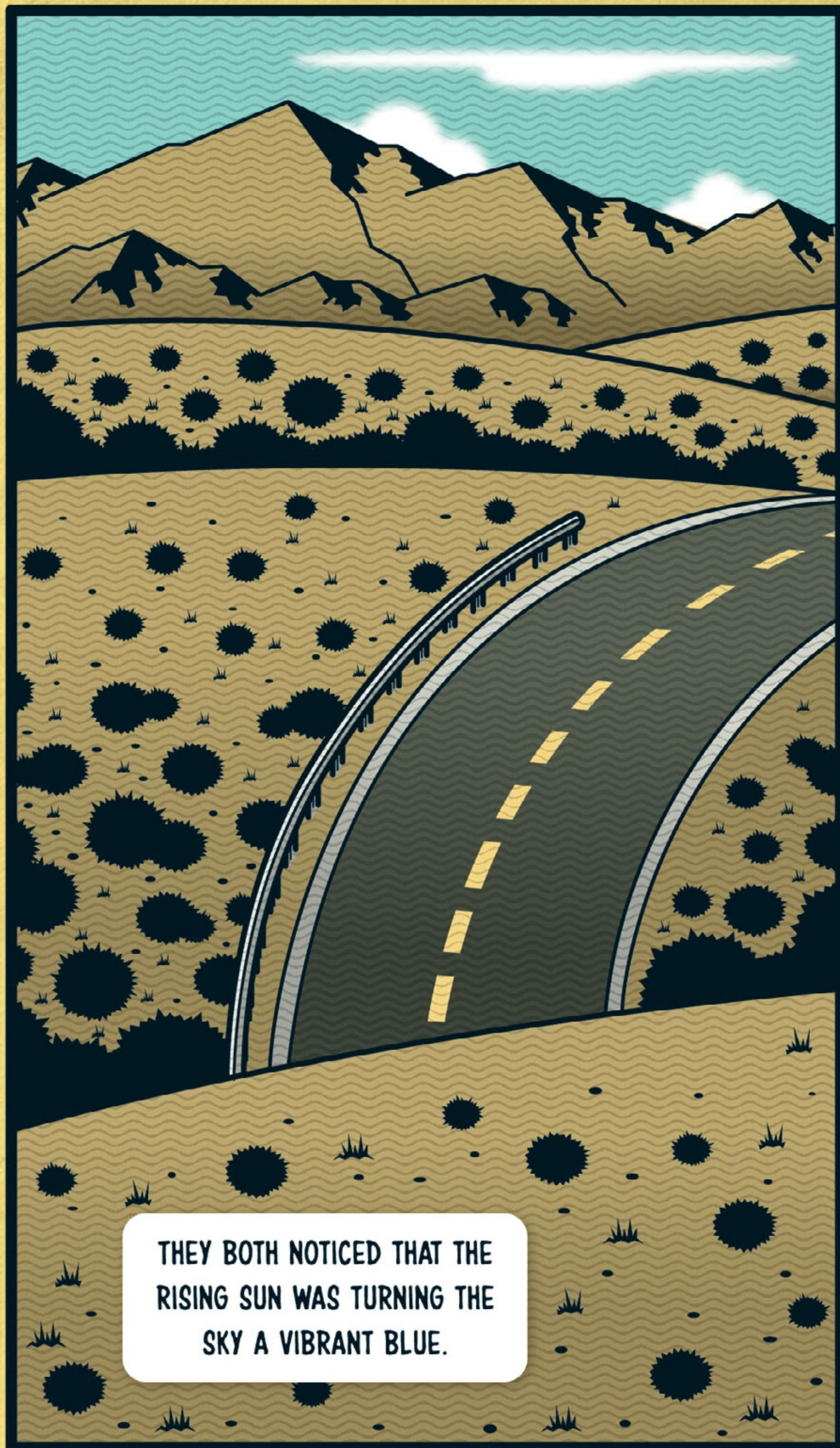
THE SUN WAS STARTING TO COME UP, AND THEY COULD DIMLY MAKE OUT THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE OF MESQUITE AND SCRUB GRASS SPREAD OUT IN FRONT OF THEM.







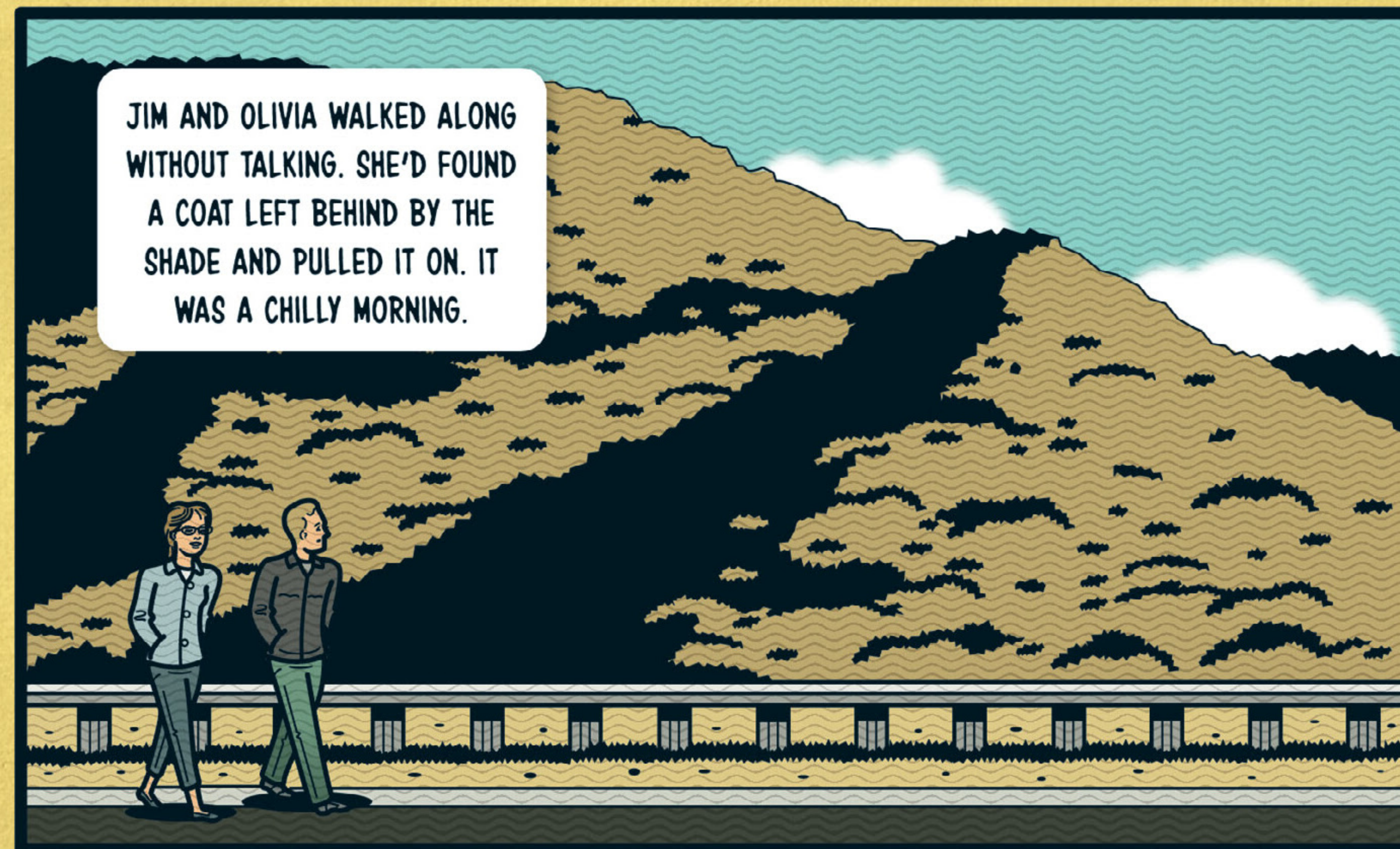




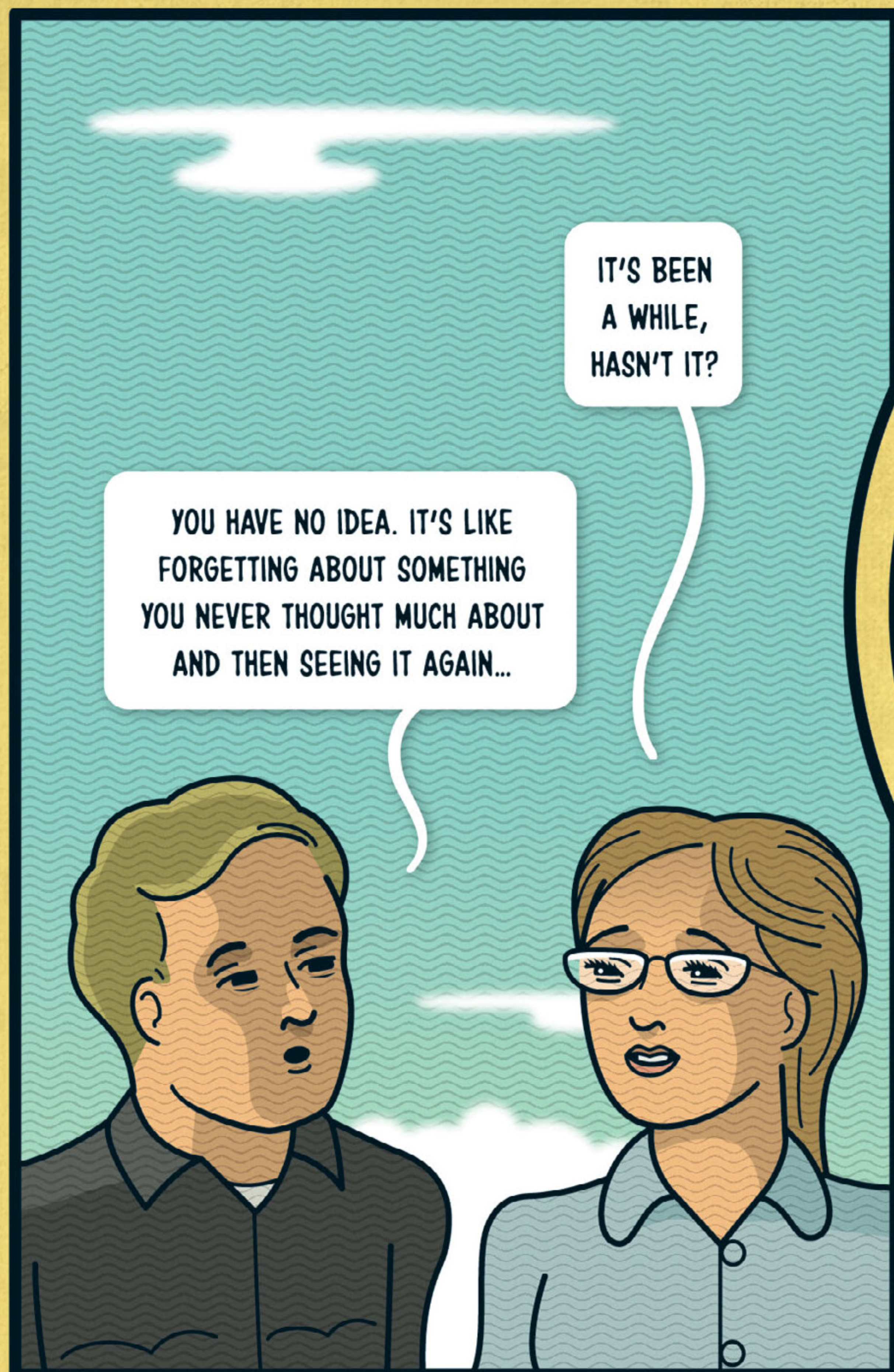
THE LONG BLACK VEIL



CHAPTER

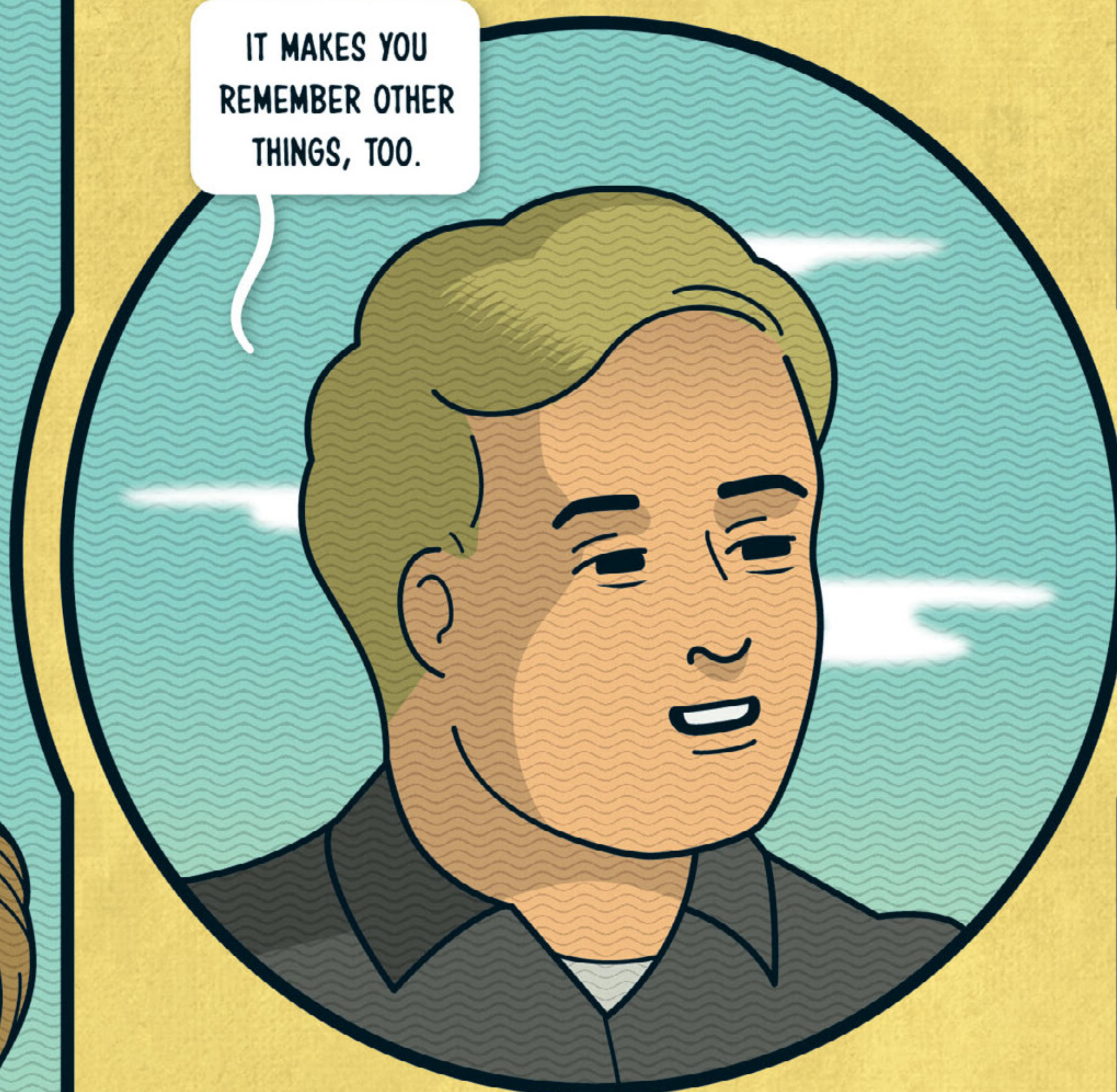


JIM AND OLIVIA WALKED ALONG WITHOUT TALKING. SHE'D FOUND A COAT LEFT BEHIND BY THE SHADE AND PULLED IT ON. IT WAS A CHILLY MORNING.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA. IT'S LIKE FORGETTING ABOUT SOMETHING YOU NEVER THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT AND THEN SEEING IT AGAIN...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?

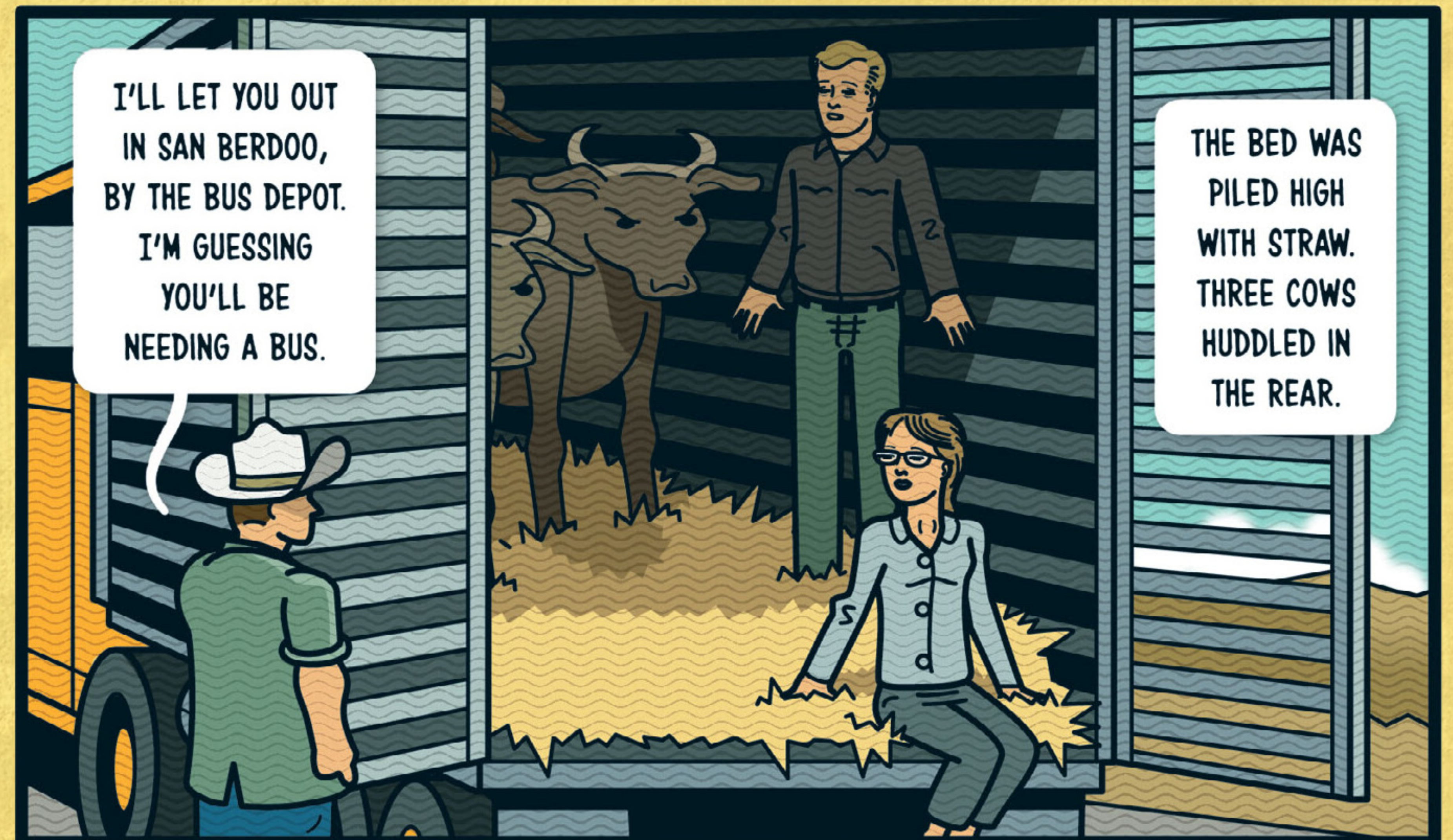


IT MAKES YOU REMEMBER OTHER THINGS, TOO.



ALL AROUND THEM WAS THE WARM HUM OF THE LIVING WORLD.

THEY CONTINUED ON THEIR WALK.

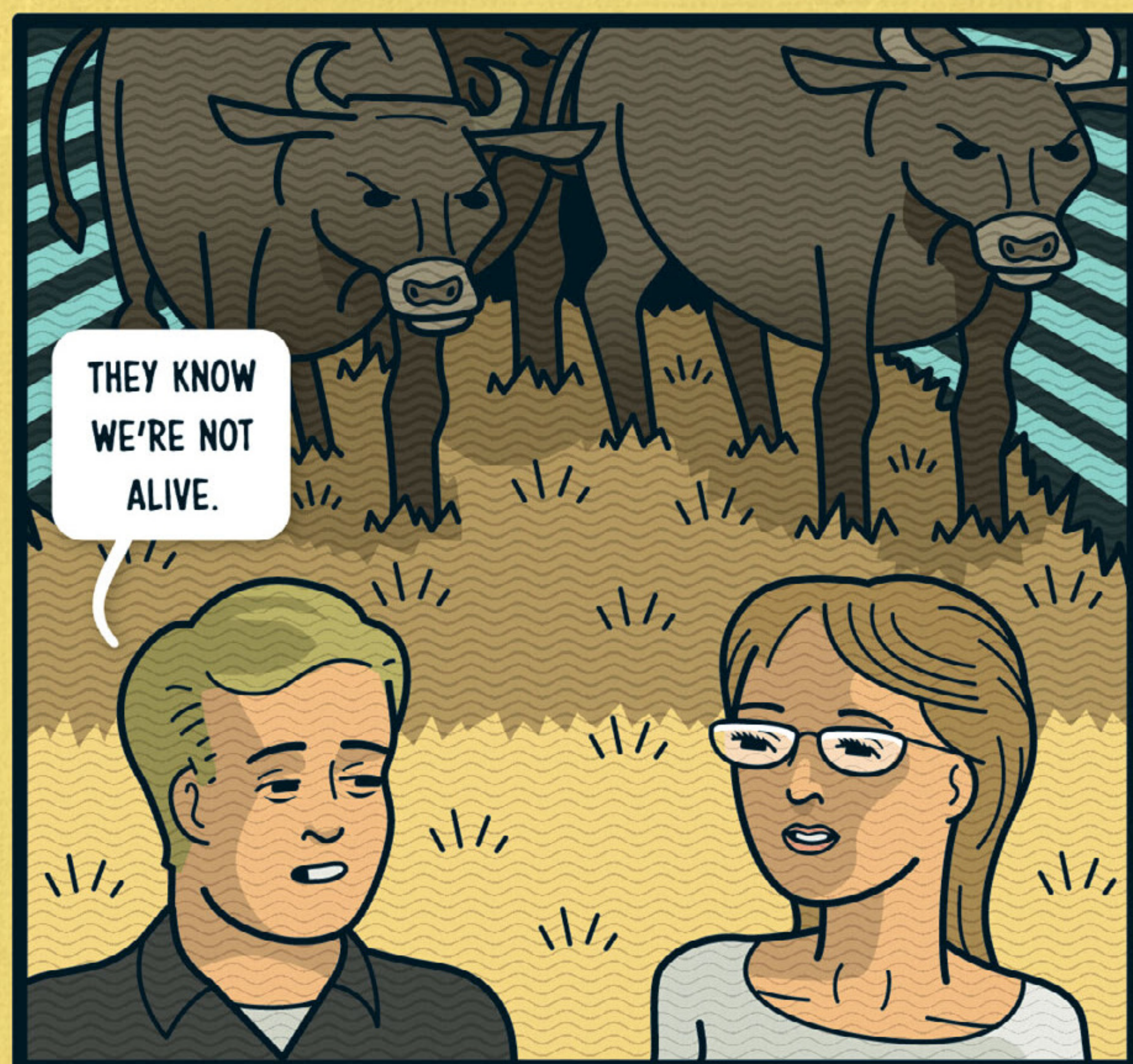




THEY SAT AS FAR FROM THEM AS THEY COULD.



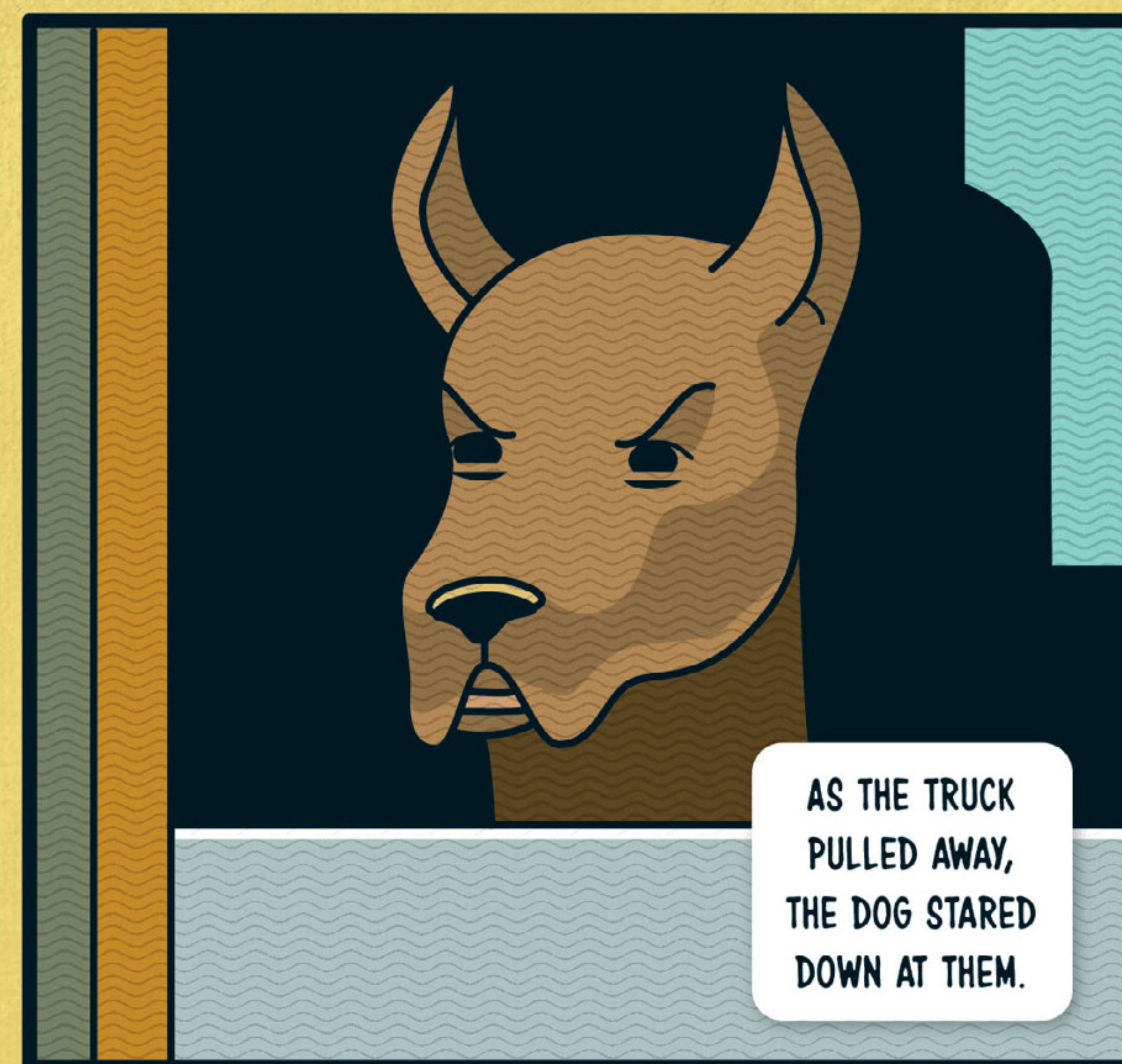
WHEN JIM STOOD UP TO STRETCH HIS LEGS, THE ANIMALS BACKED UP FURIOUSLY AGAINST THE WALL.



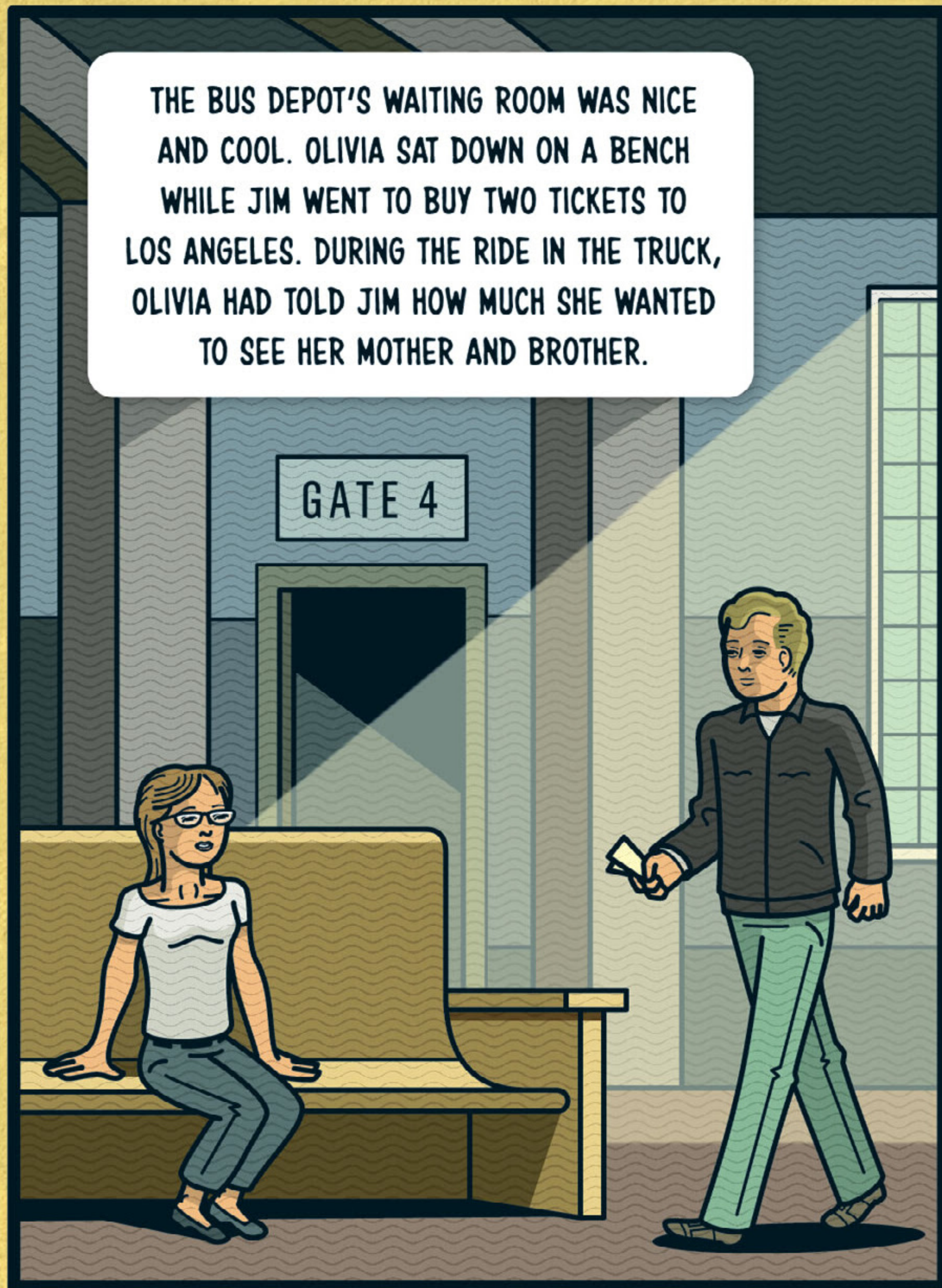
THEY KNOW WE'RE NOT ALIVE.



AN HOUR LATER, THEY PULLED INTO SAN BERNARDINO. THEY GOT OUT OF THE TRUCK AND THANKED THE MAN.



AS THE TRUCK PULLED AWAY, THE DOG STARED DOWN AT THEM.



THE BUS DEPOT'S WAITING ROOM WAS NICE AND COOL. OLIVIA SAT DOWN ON A BENCH WHILE JIM WENT TO BUY TWO TICKETS TO LOS ANGELES. DURING THE RIDE IN THE TRUCK, OLIVIA HAD TOLD JIM HOW MUCH SHE WANTED TO SEE HER MOTHER AND BROTHER.



BUT I'M JUST ONE PERSON. RATHER, I WAS ONE PERSON... AND ONE PERSON CAN'T UPSET ANYTHING. NO ONE WILL EVEN NOTICE.

IF YOU SEE THEM, THEY'LL KNOW YOU CAME BACK. DON'T YOU SEE? ONCE PEOPLE KNOW YOU CAN RETURN FROM THE DEAD, IT WILL UPSET THE WHOLE BALANCE.

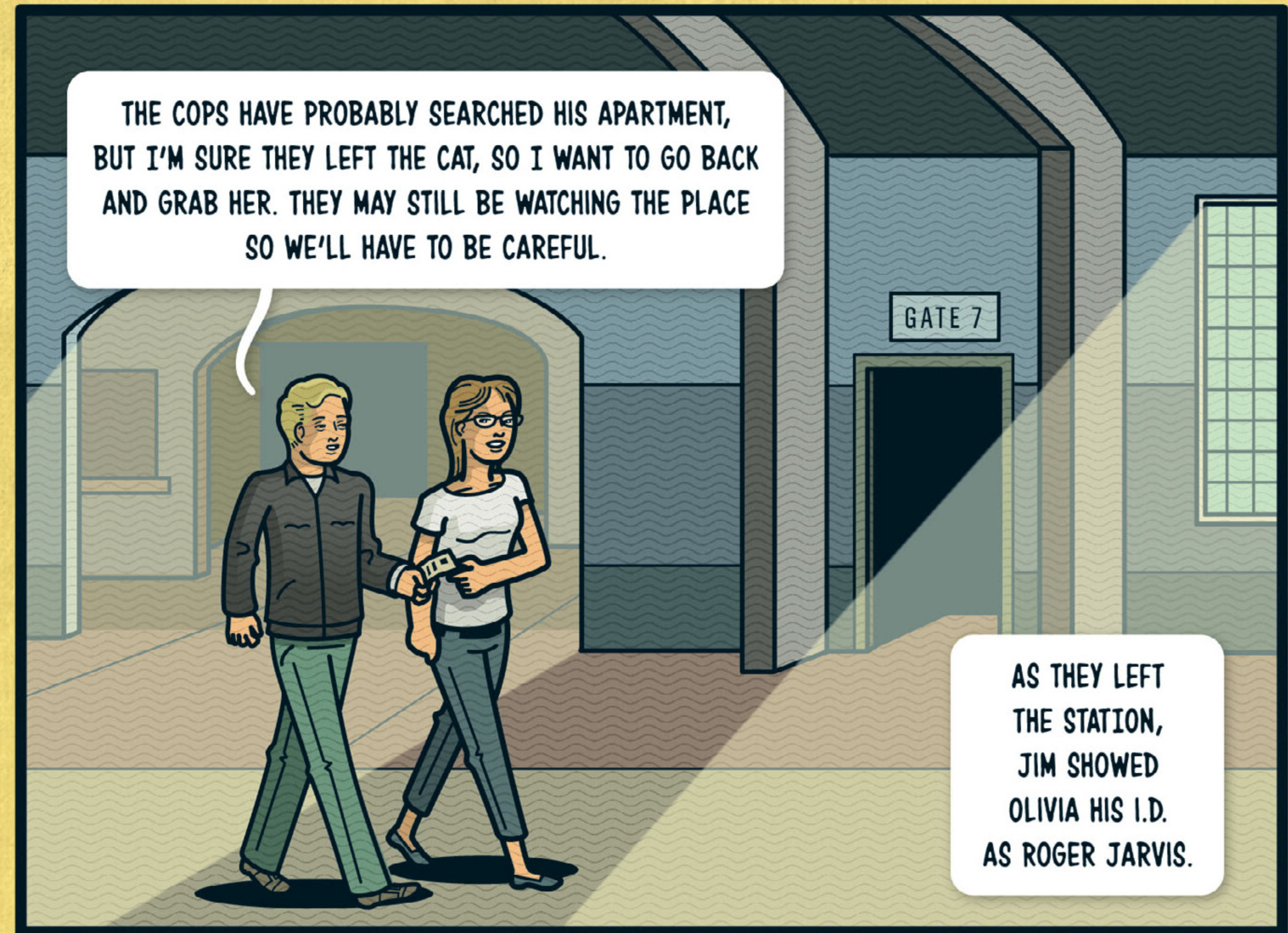


YOU DID.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANYONE COMING BACK? EVER?

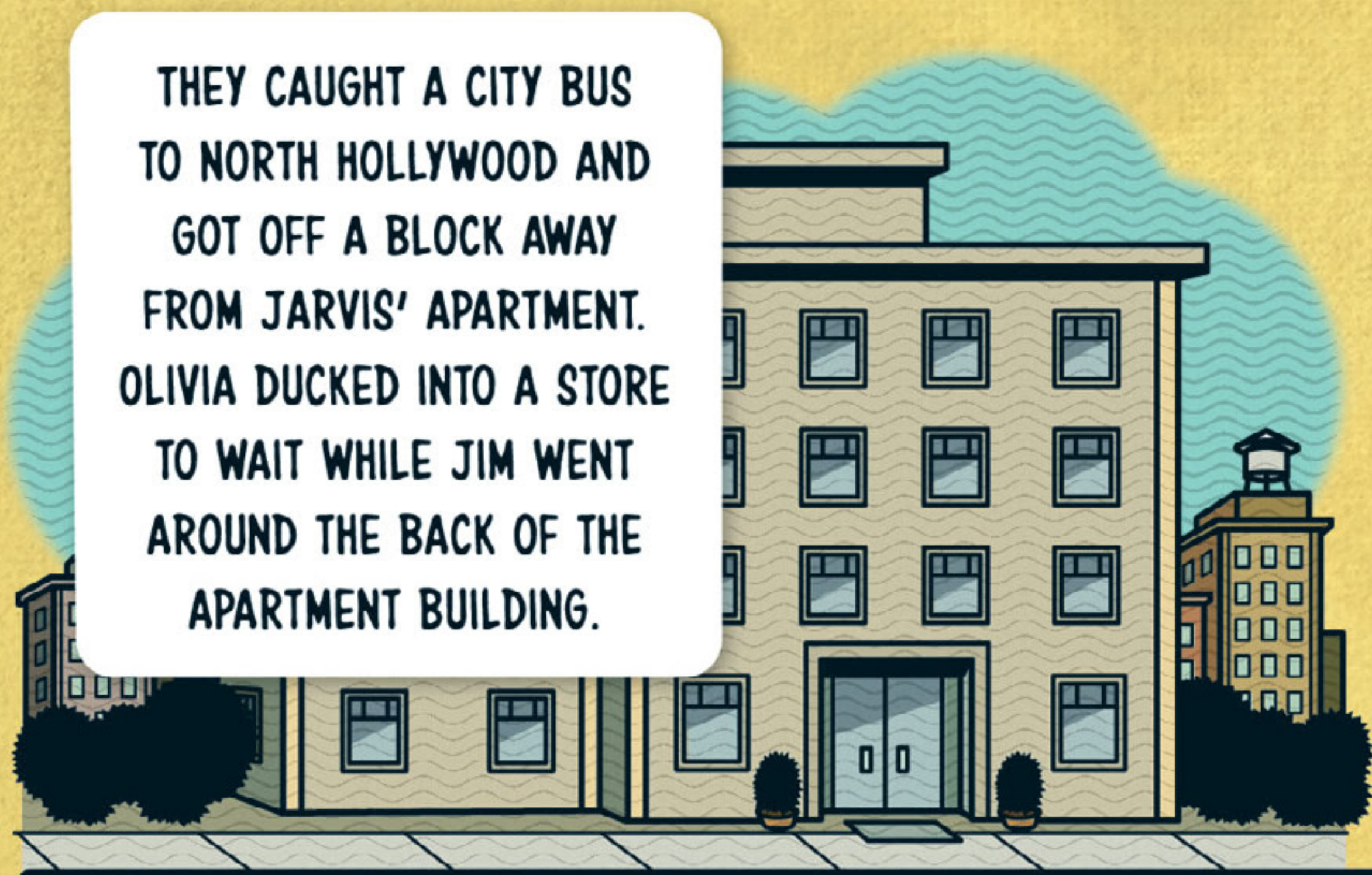


IT WAS A TWO-HOUR BUS RIDE TO L.A.

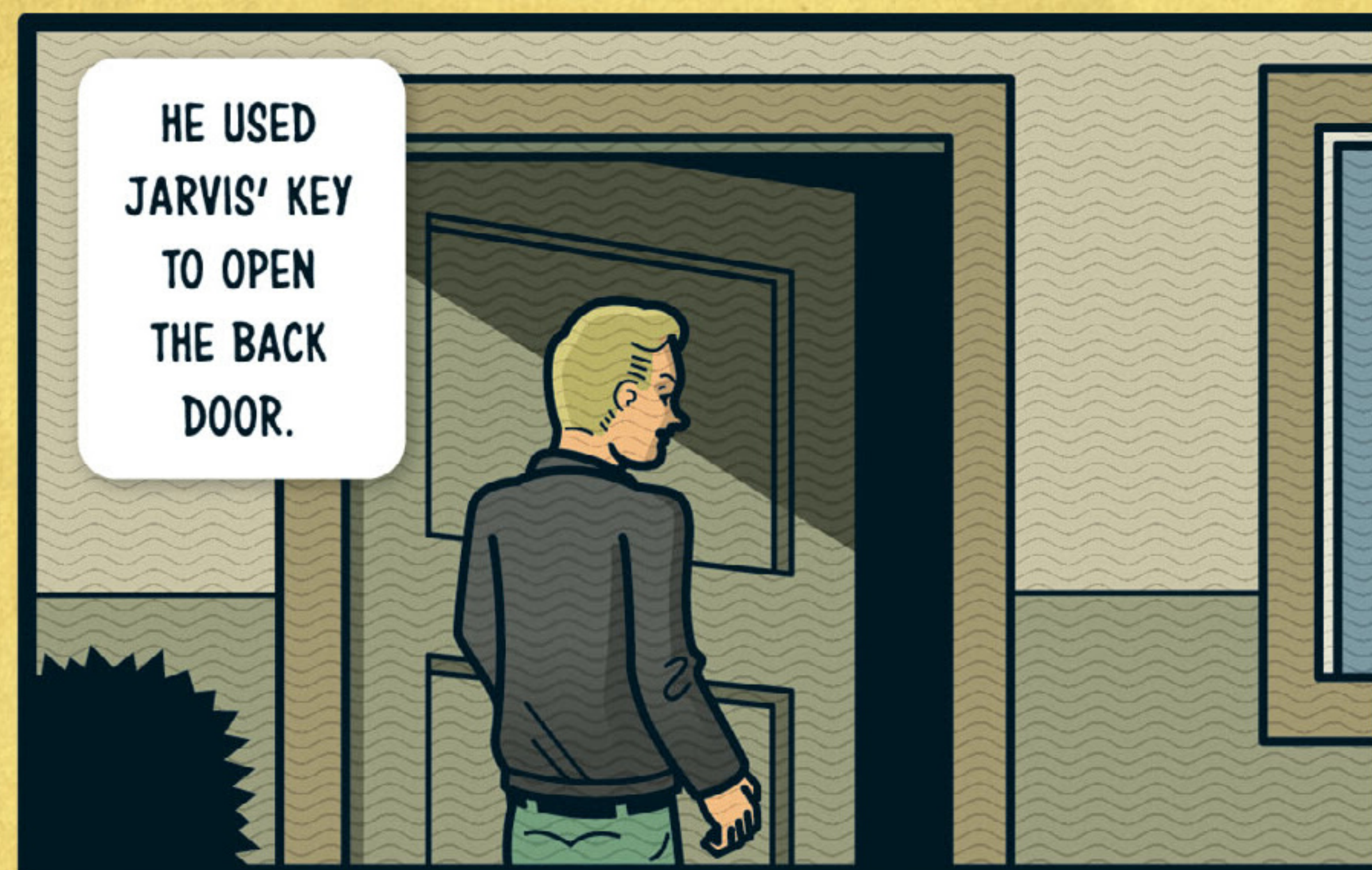


THE COPS HAVE PROBABLY SEARCHED HIS APARTMENT, BUT I'M SURE THEY LEFT THE CAT, SO I WANT TO GO BACK AND GRAB HER. THEY MAY STILL BE WATCHING THE PLACE SO WE'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

AS THEY LEFT THE STATION, JIM SHOWED OLIVIA HIS I.D. AS ROGER JARVIS.



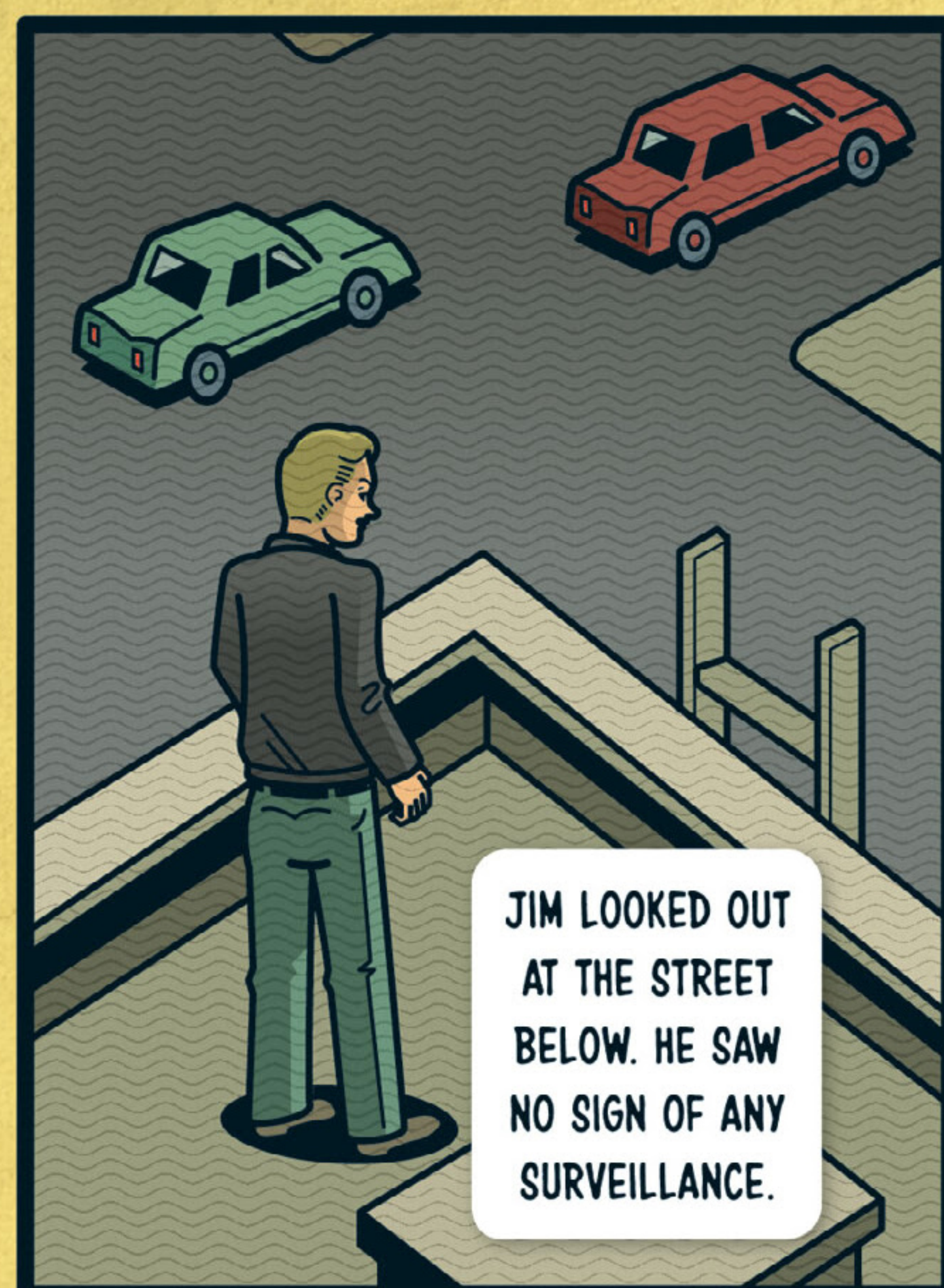
THEY CAUGHT A CITY BUS TO NORTH HOLLYWOOD AND GOT OFF A BLOCK AWAY FROM JARVIS' APARTMENT. OLIVIA DUCKED INTO A STORE TO WAIT WHILE JIM WENT AROUND THE BACK OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING.



HE USED JARVIS' KEY TO OPEN THE BACK DOOR.



HE THEN WALKED UP FOUR FLIGHTS OF STAIRS TO THE ROOF.



JIM LOOKED OUT AT THE STREET BELOW. HE SAW NO SIGN OF ANY SURVEILLANCE.

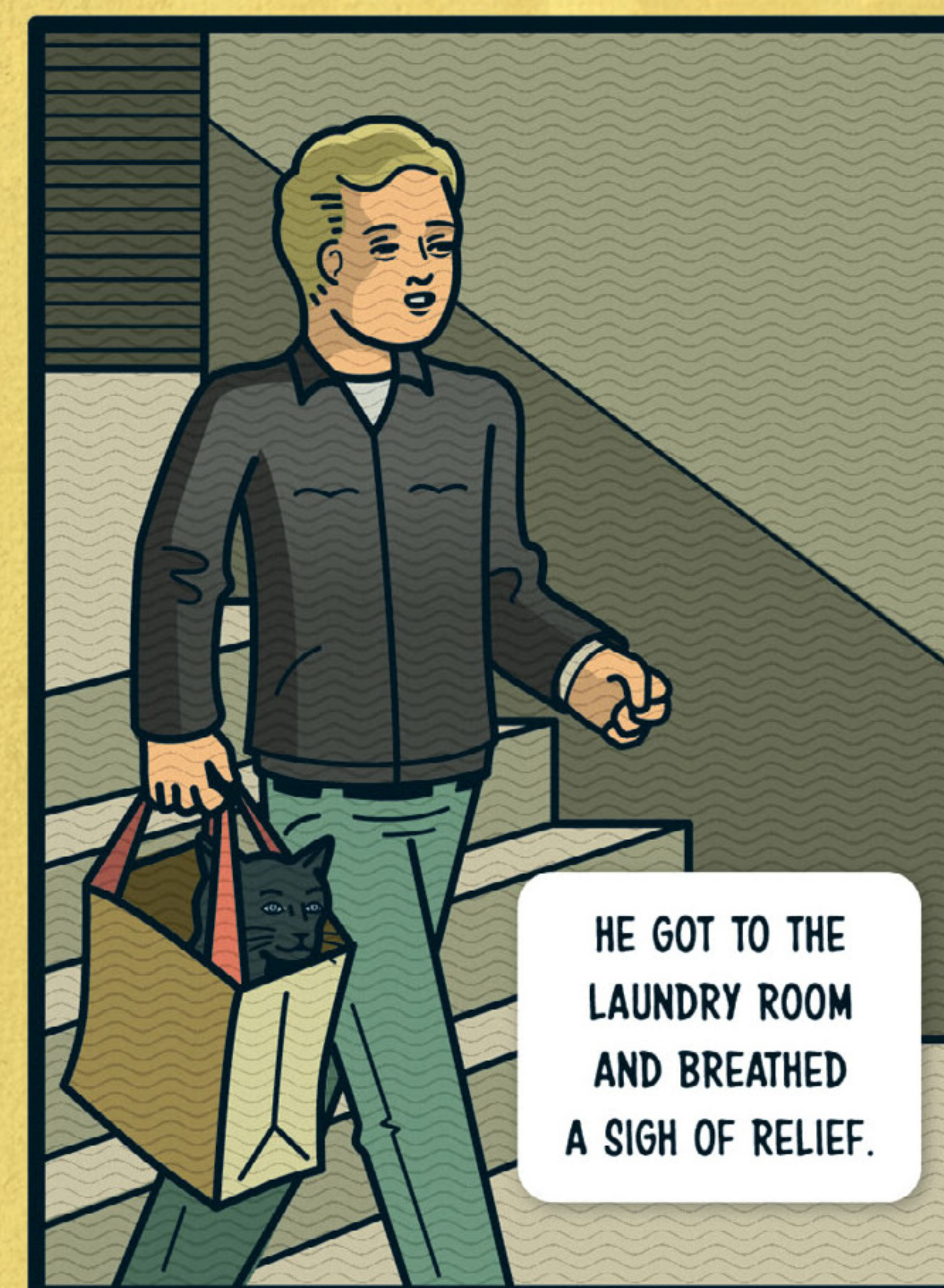


HERE, KITTY, KITTY. HERE, KITTY, KITTY.

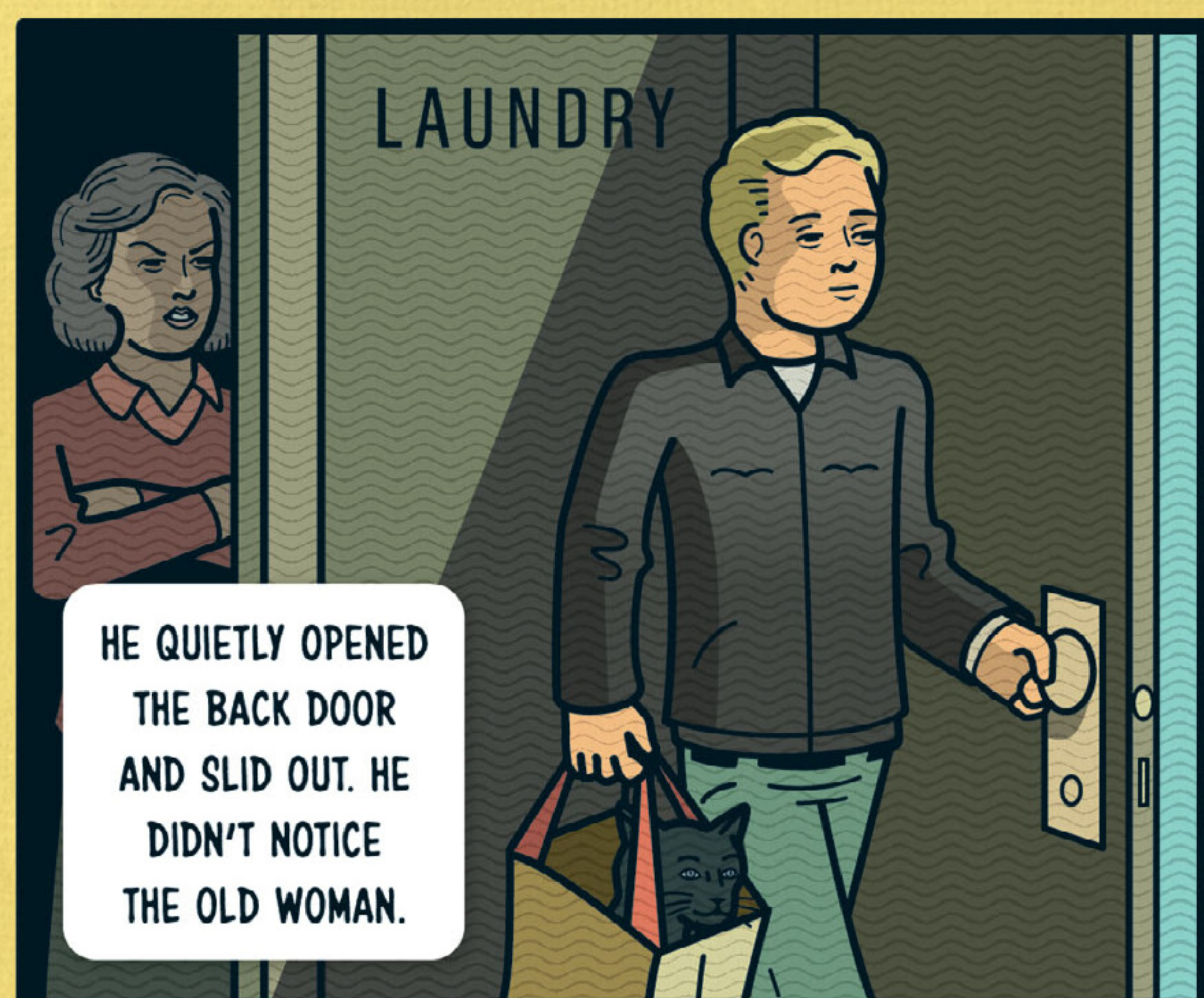
HE SLIPPED DOWN THE FIRE ESCAPE TO JARVIS' WINDOW.



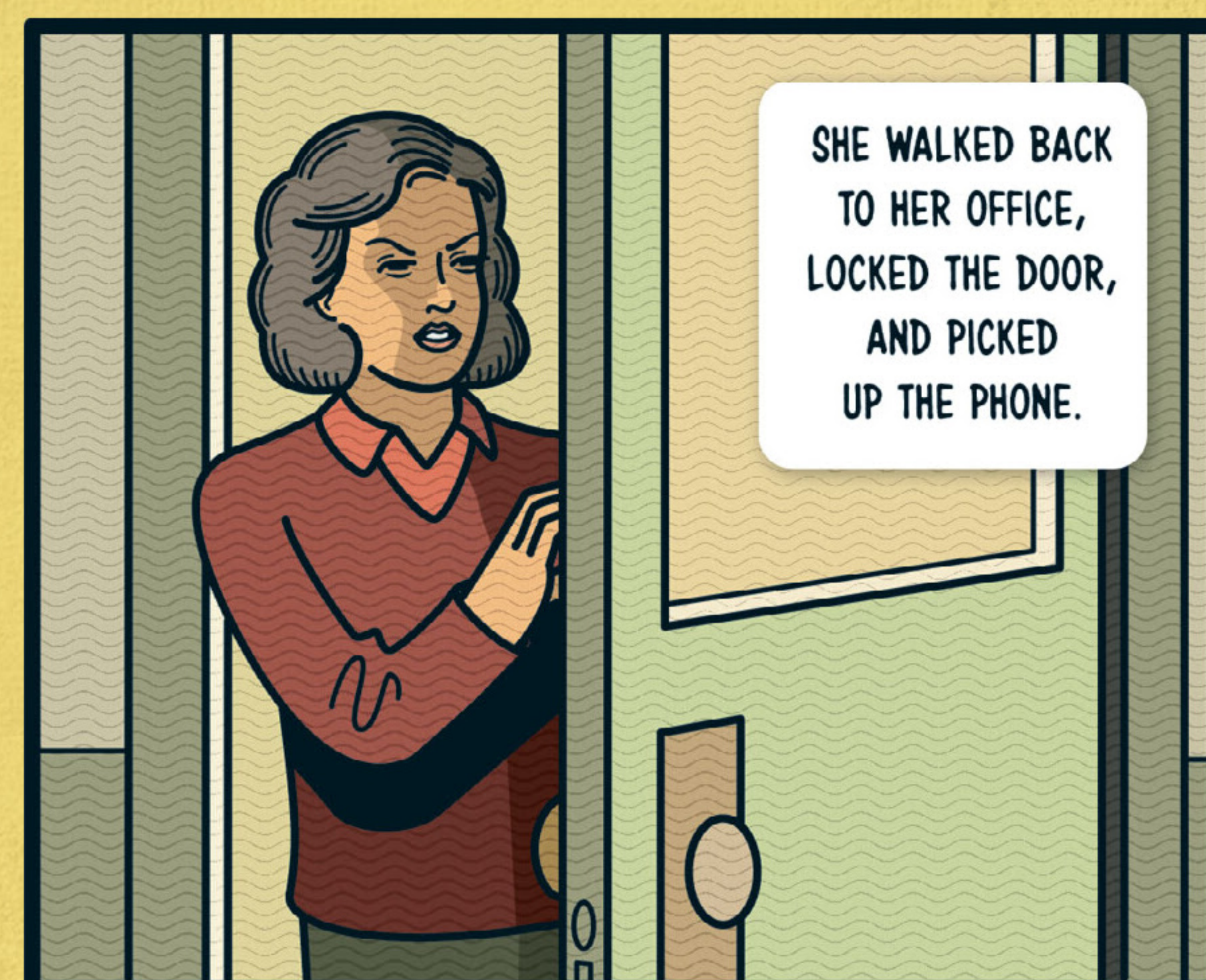
YOU'RE THE ONLY ANIMAL WHO'S NOT AFRAID OF A SHADE. WHY IS THAT?



HE GOT TO THE LAUNDRY ROOM AND BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF.

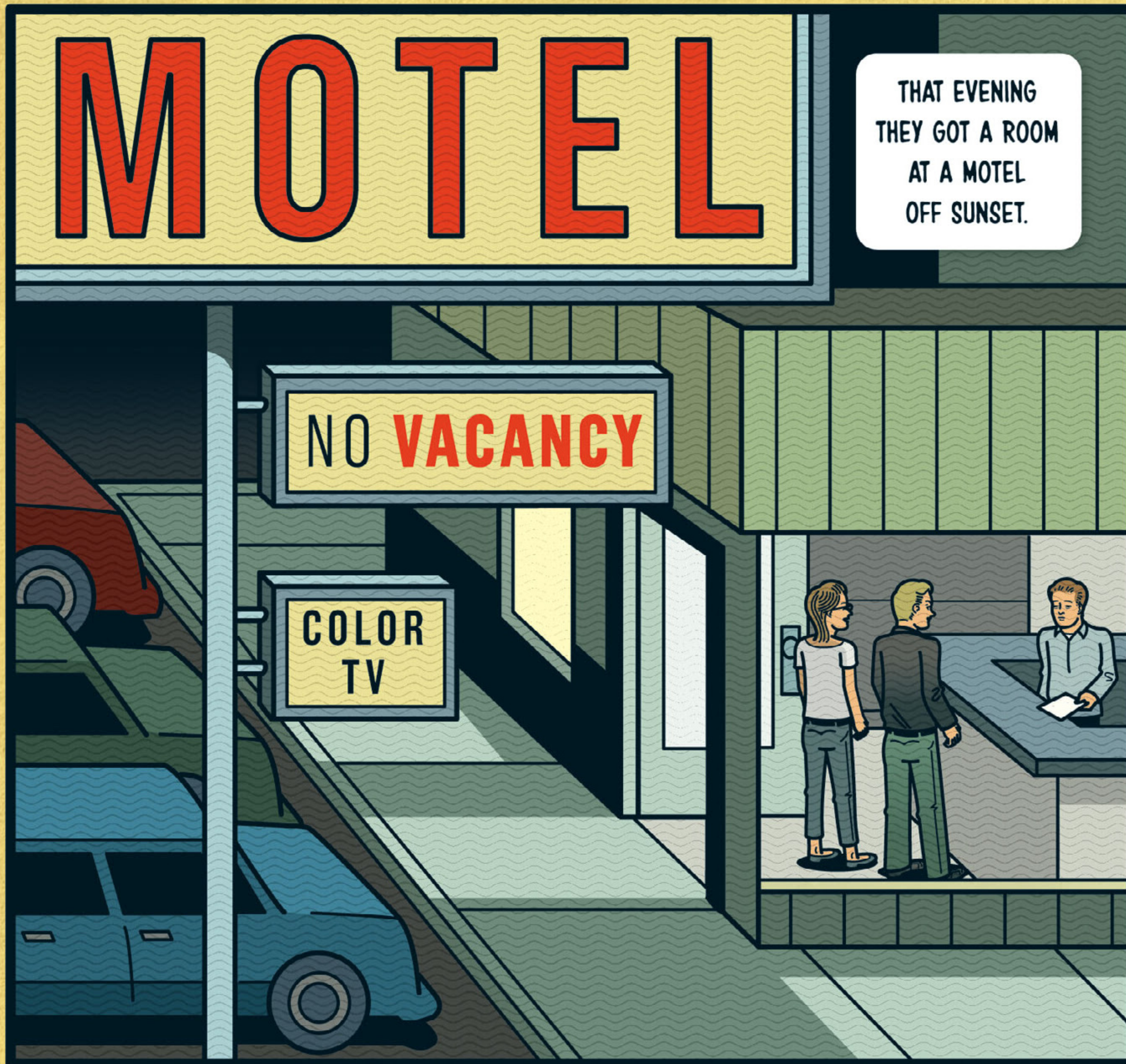


HE QUIETLY OPENED THE BACK DOOR AND SLID OUT. HE DIDN'T NOTICE THE OLD WOMAN.



SHE WALKED BACK TO HER OFFICE, LOCKED THE DOOR, AND PICKED UP THE PHONE.

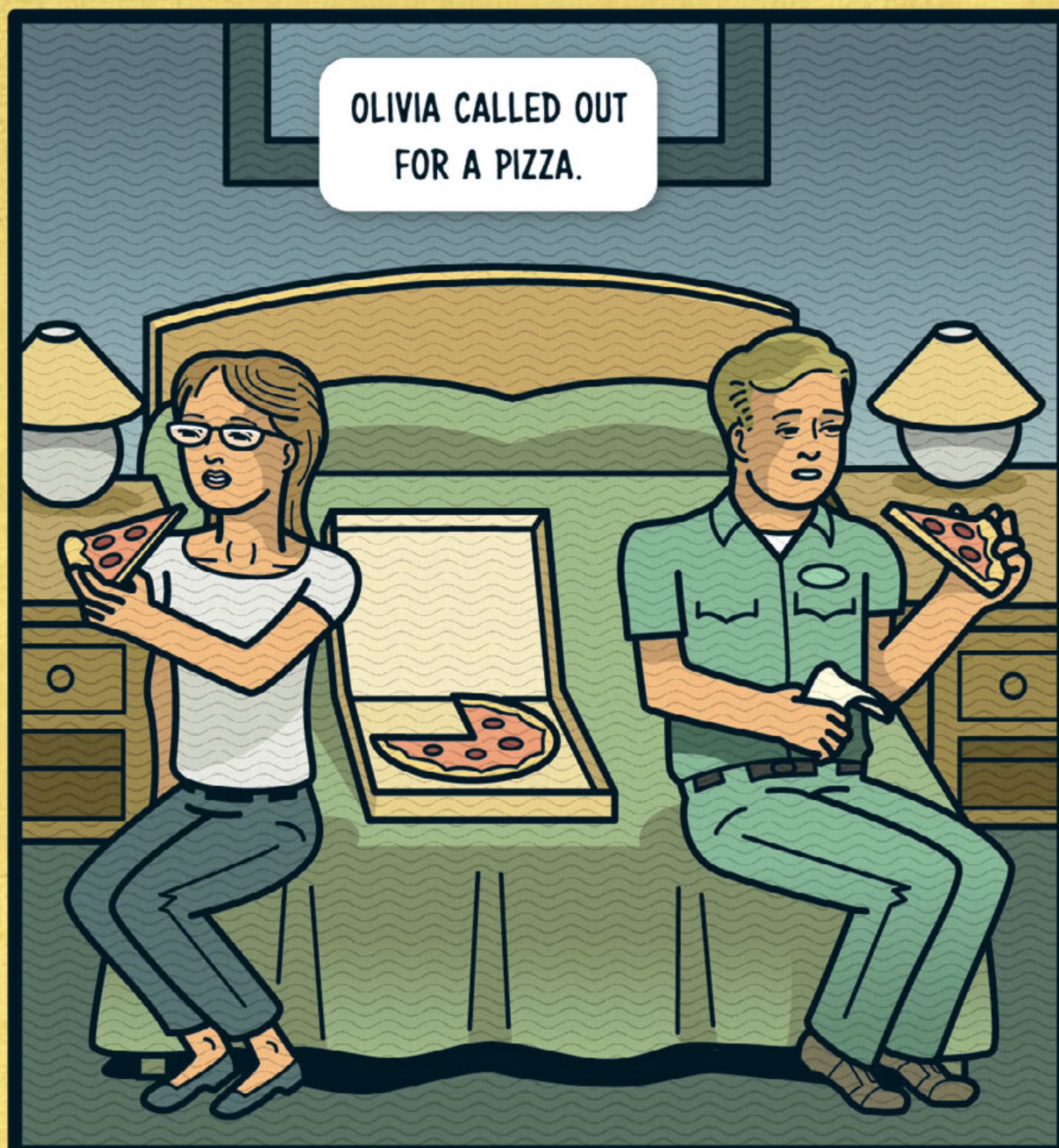




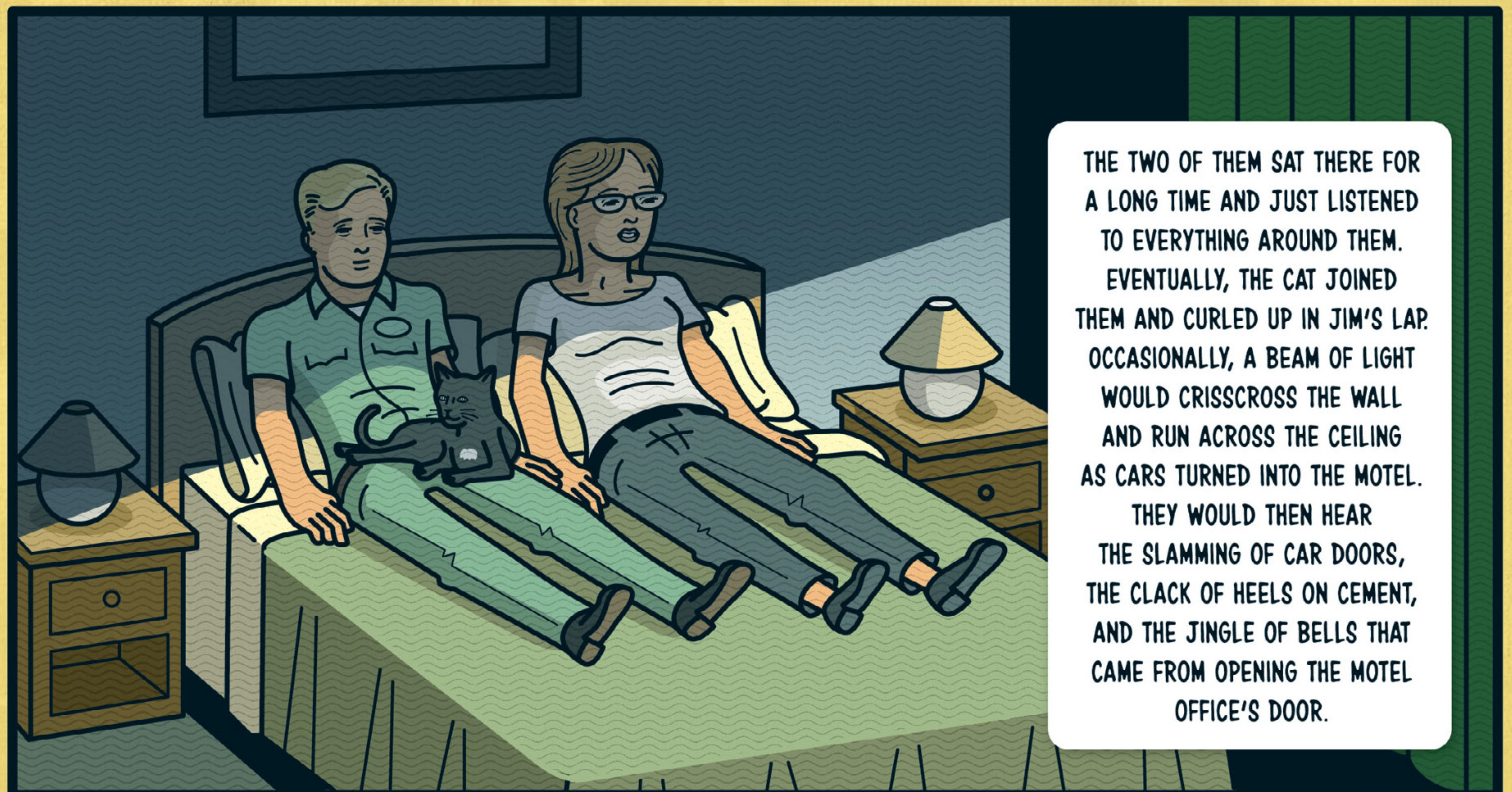
THAT EVENING
THEY GOT A ROOM
AT A MOTEL
OFF SUNSET.



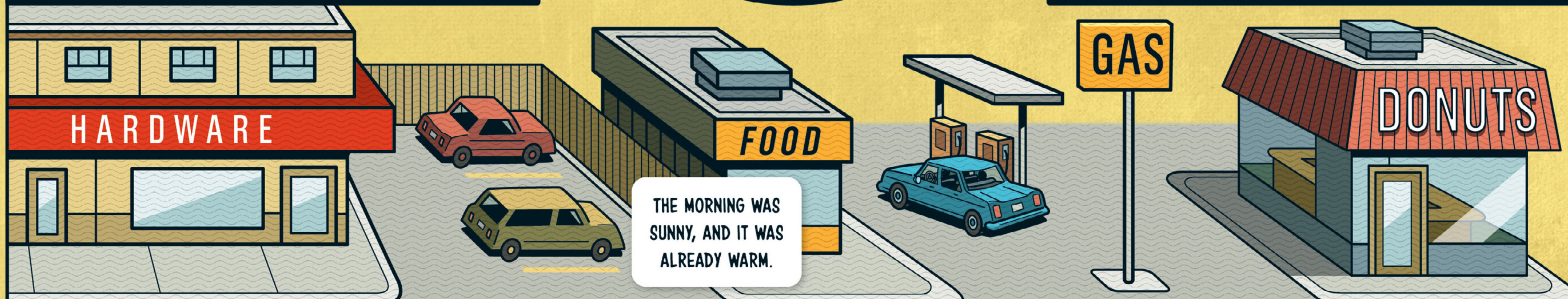
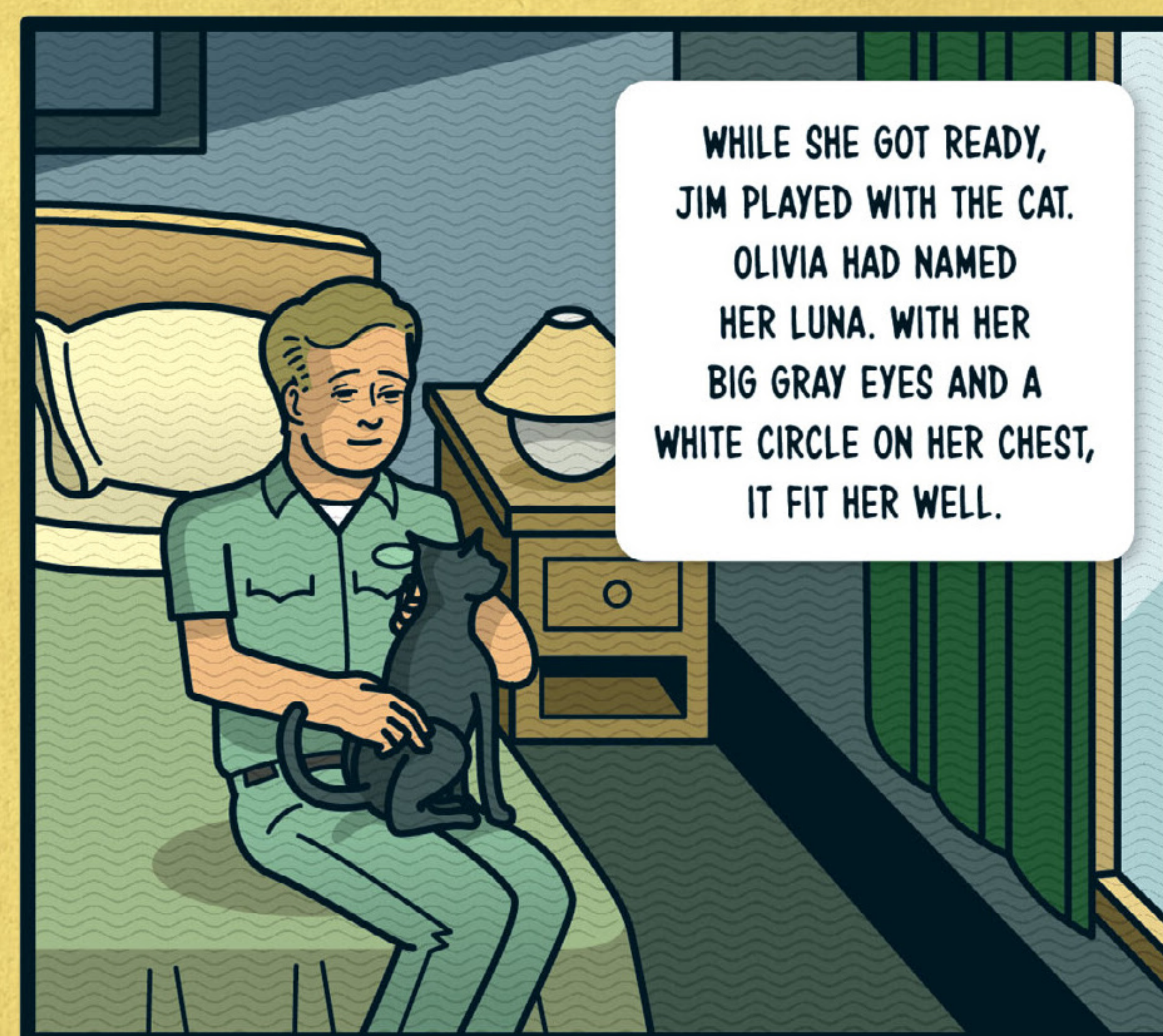
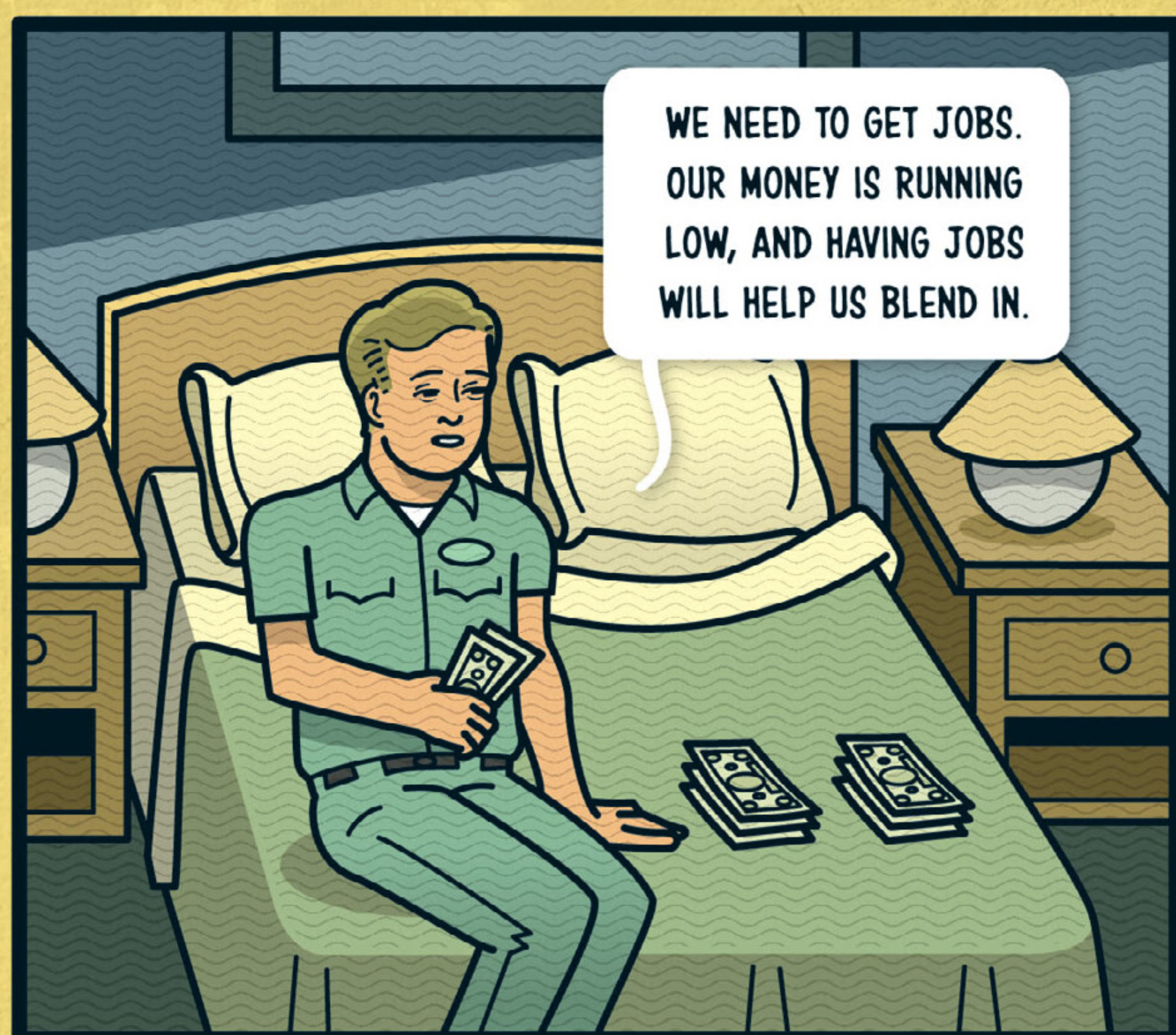
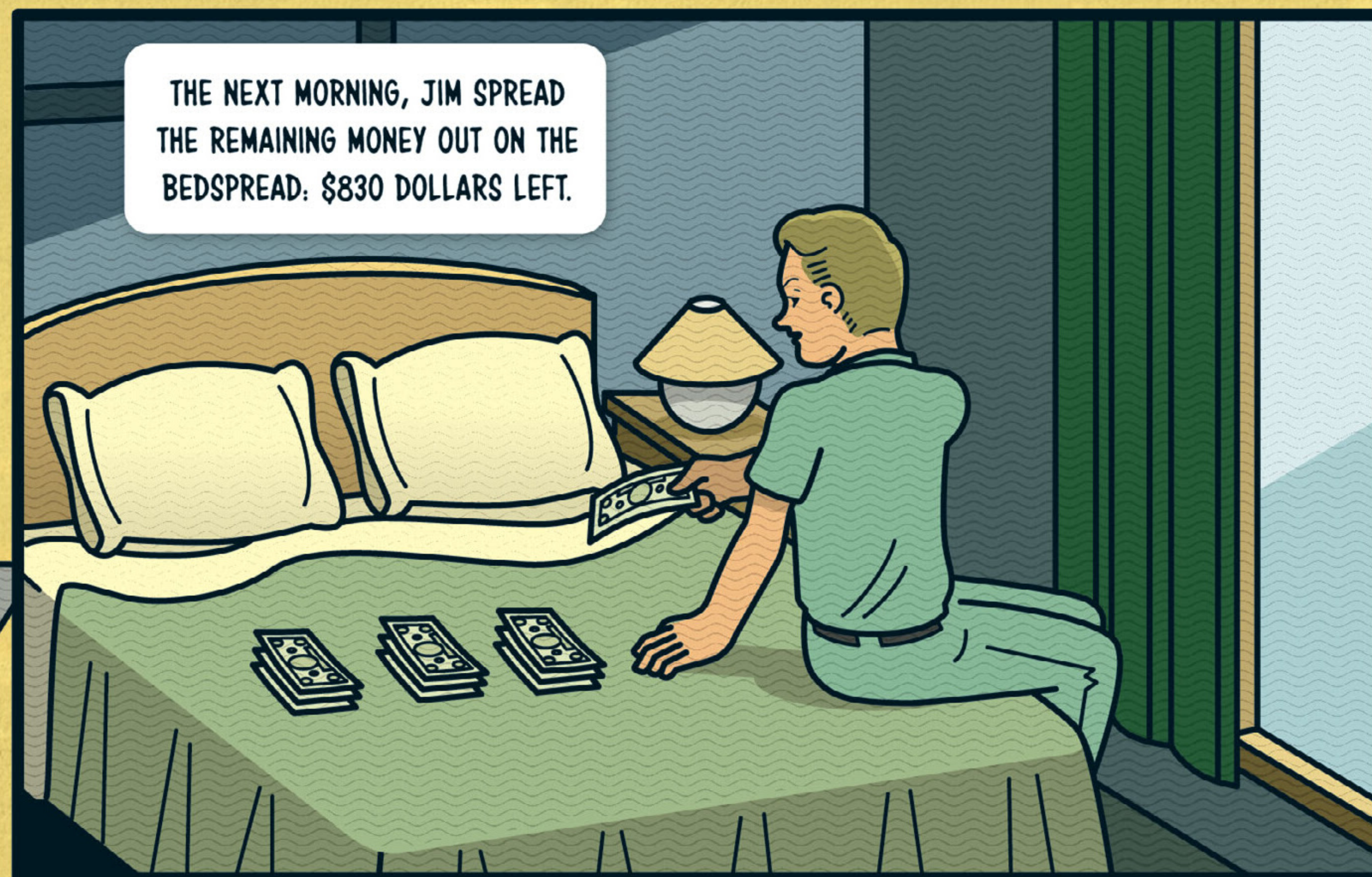
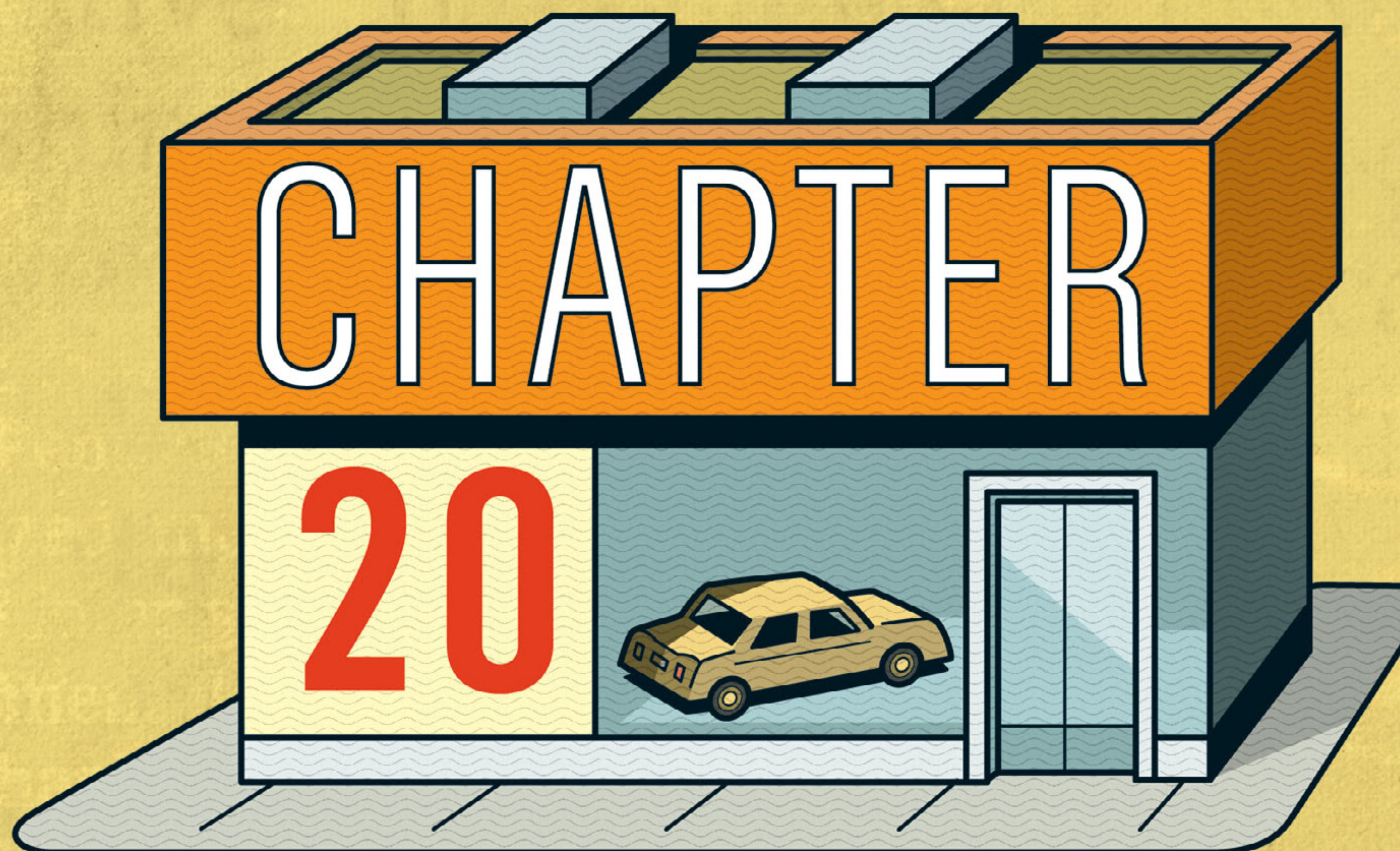
THE CLERK MADE
A BIT OF A FACE
AT THE WORN BILLS,
BUT THEY PASSED
INSPECTION AS
LEGAL TENDER.



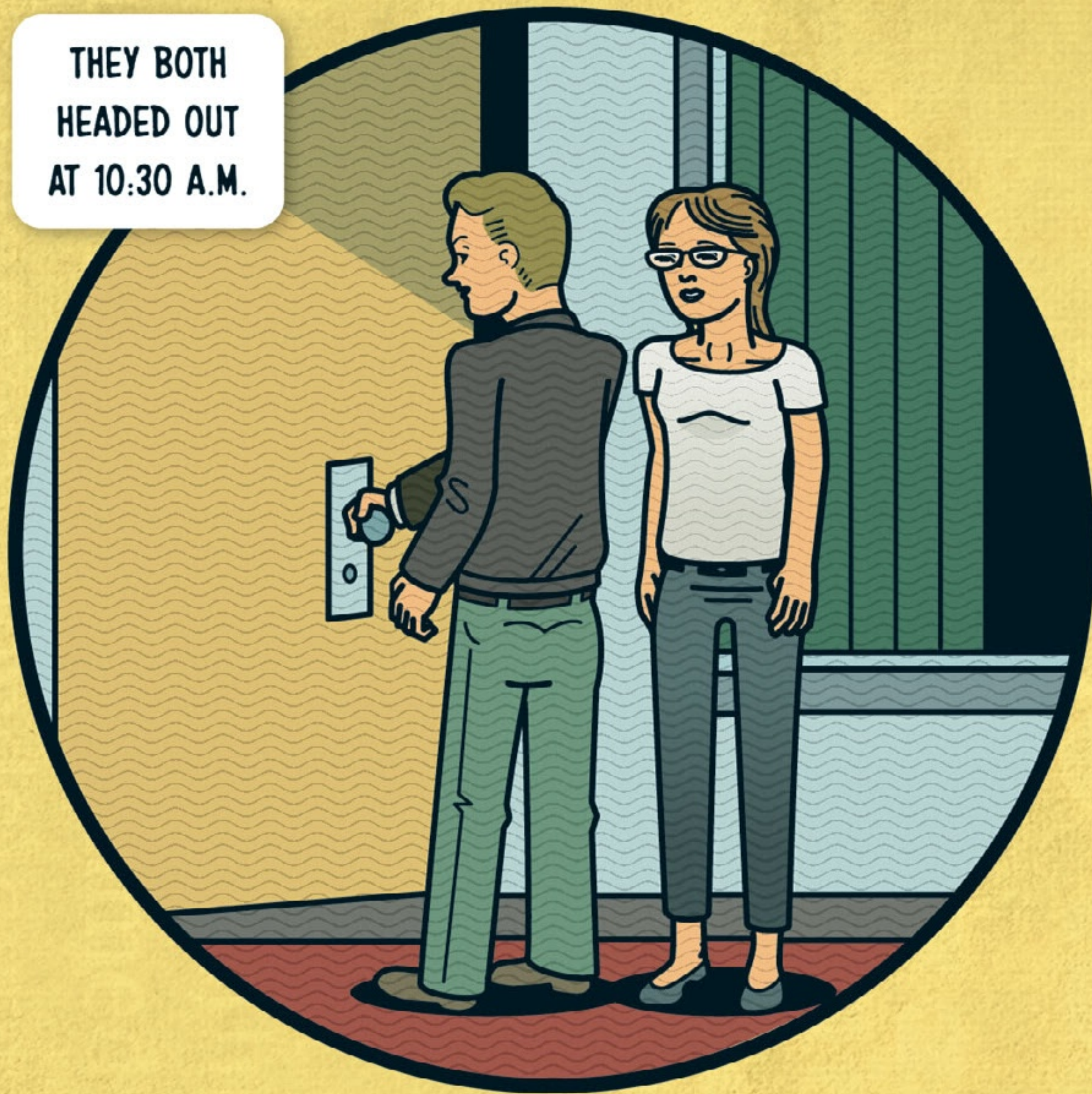
OLIVIA CALLED OUT
FOR A PIZZA.



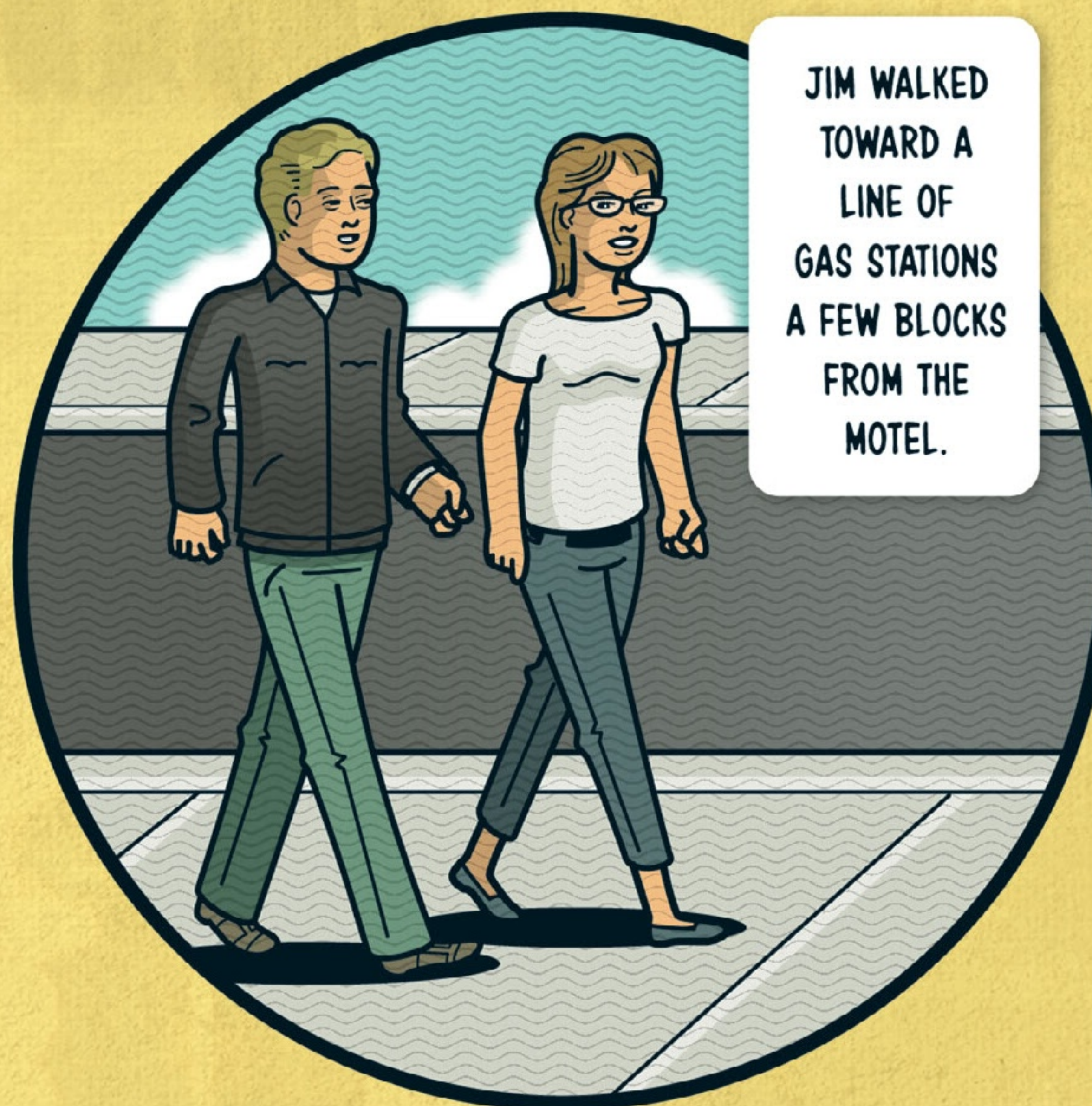
THE TWO OF THEM SAT THERE FOR
A LONG TIME AND JUST LISTENED
TO EVERYTHING AROUND THEM.
EVENTUALLY, THE CAT JOINED
THEM AND CURLED UP IN JIM'S LAP.
OCCASIONALLY, A BEAM OF LIGHT
WOULD CRISSCROSS THE WALL
AND RUN ACROSS THE CEILING
AS CARS TURNED INTO THE MOTEL.
THEY WOULD THEN HEAR
THE SLAMMING OF CAR DOORS,
THE CLACK OF HEELS ON CEMENT,
AND THE JINGLE OF BELLS THAT
CAME FROM OPENING THE MOTEL
OFFICE'S DOOR.



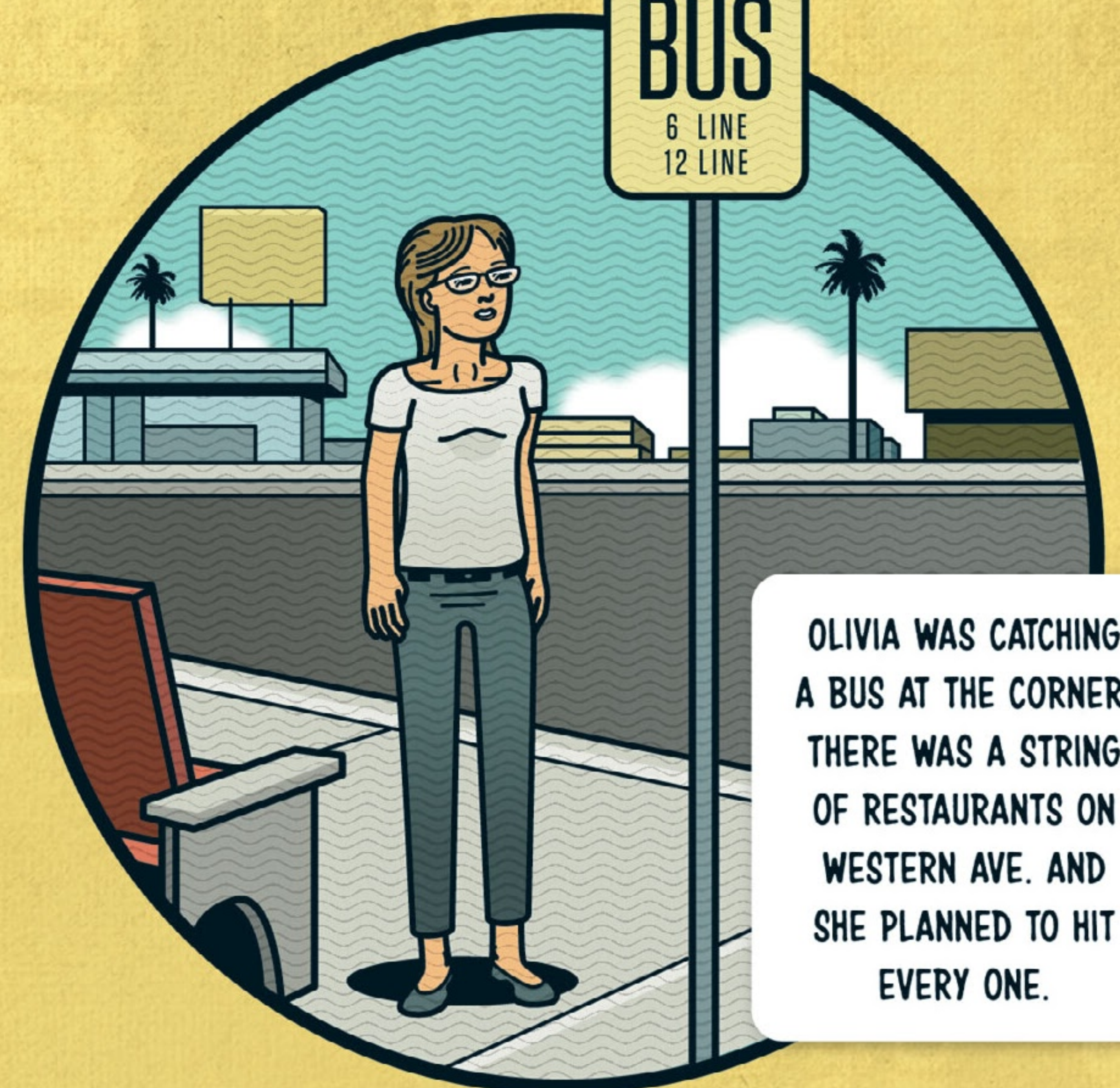
THEY BOTH
HEADED OUT
AT 10:30 A.M.



JIM WALKED
TOWARD A
LINE OF
GAS STATIONS
A FEW BLOCKS
FROM THE
MOTEL.

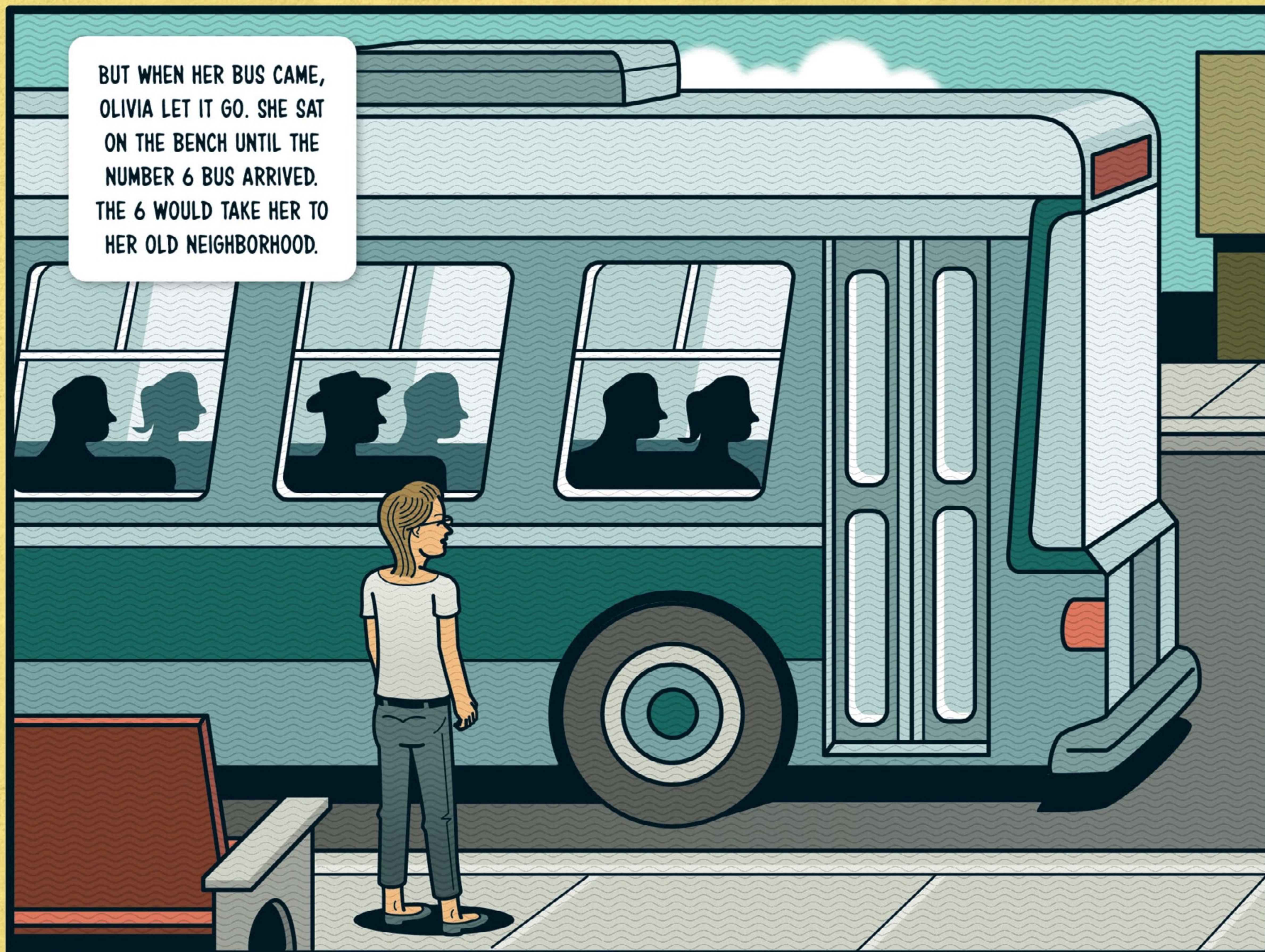


BUS
6 LINE
12 LINE



OLIVIA WAS CATCHING
A BUS AT THE CORNER.
THERE WAS A STRING
OF RESTAURANTS ON
WESTERN AVE. AND
SHE PLANNED TO HIT
EVERY ONE.

BUT WHEN HER BUS CAME,
OLIVIA LET IT GO. SHE SAT
ON THE BENCH UNTIL THE
NUMBER 6 BUS ARRIVED.
THE 6 WOULD TAKE HER TO
HER OLD NEIGHBORHOOD.

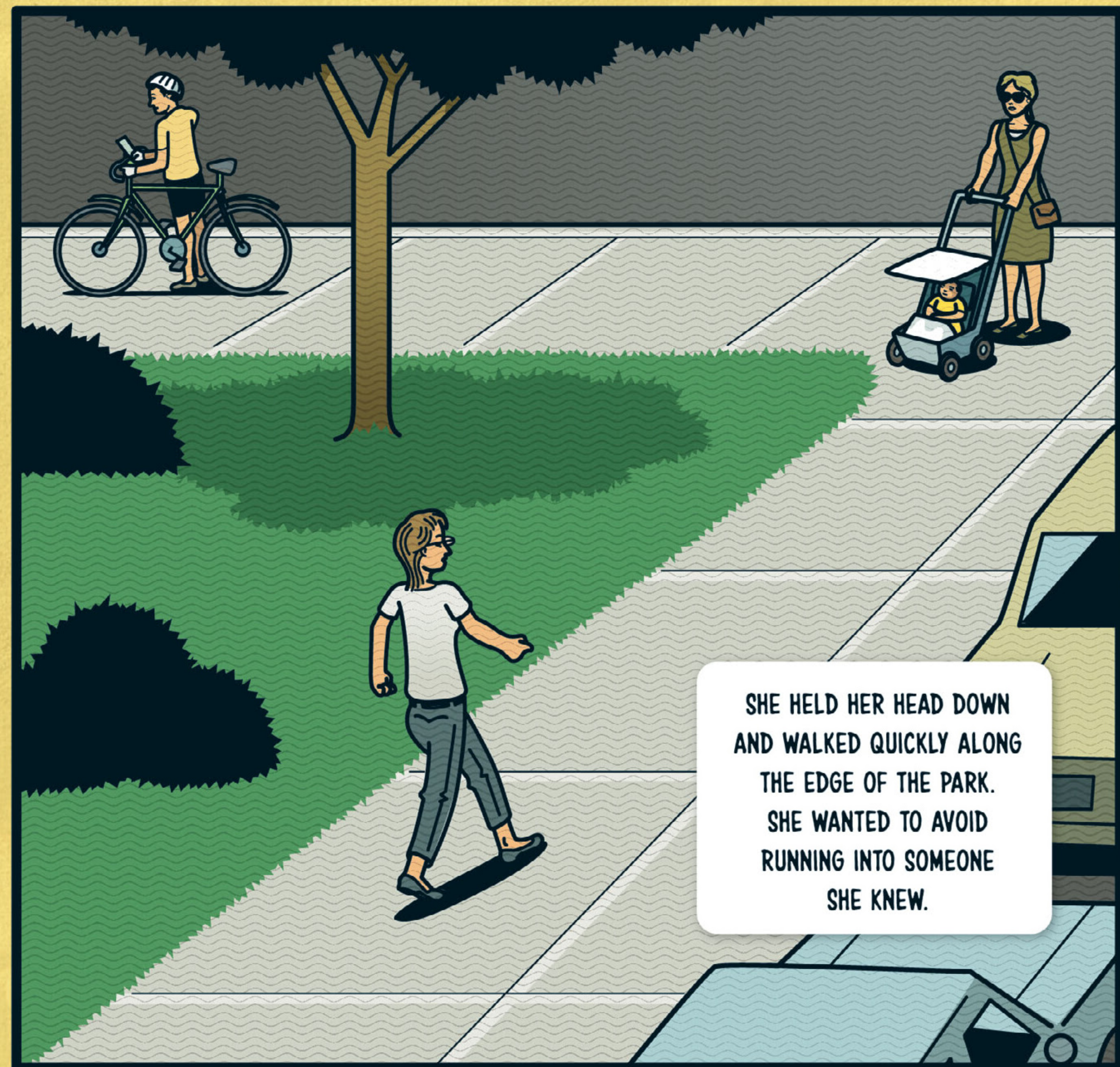


SHE LOOKED AROUND BEFORE
BOARDING. HER HEART WAS
POUNDING AS THE BUS
DOORS CLOSED. WHEN IT
PULLED OUT INTO TRAFFIC,
SHE BREATHED A SIGH
OF RELIEF.

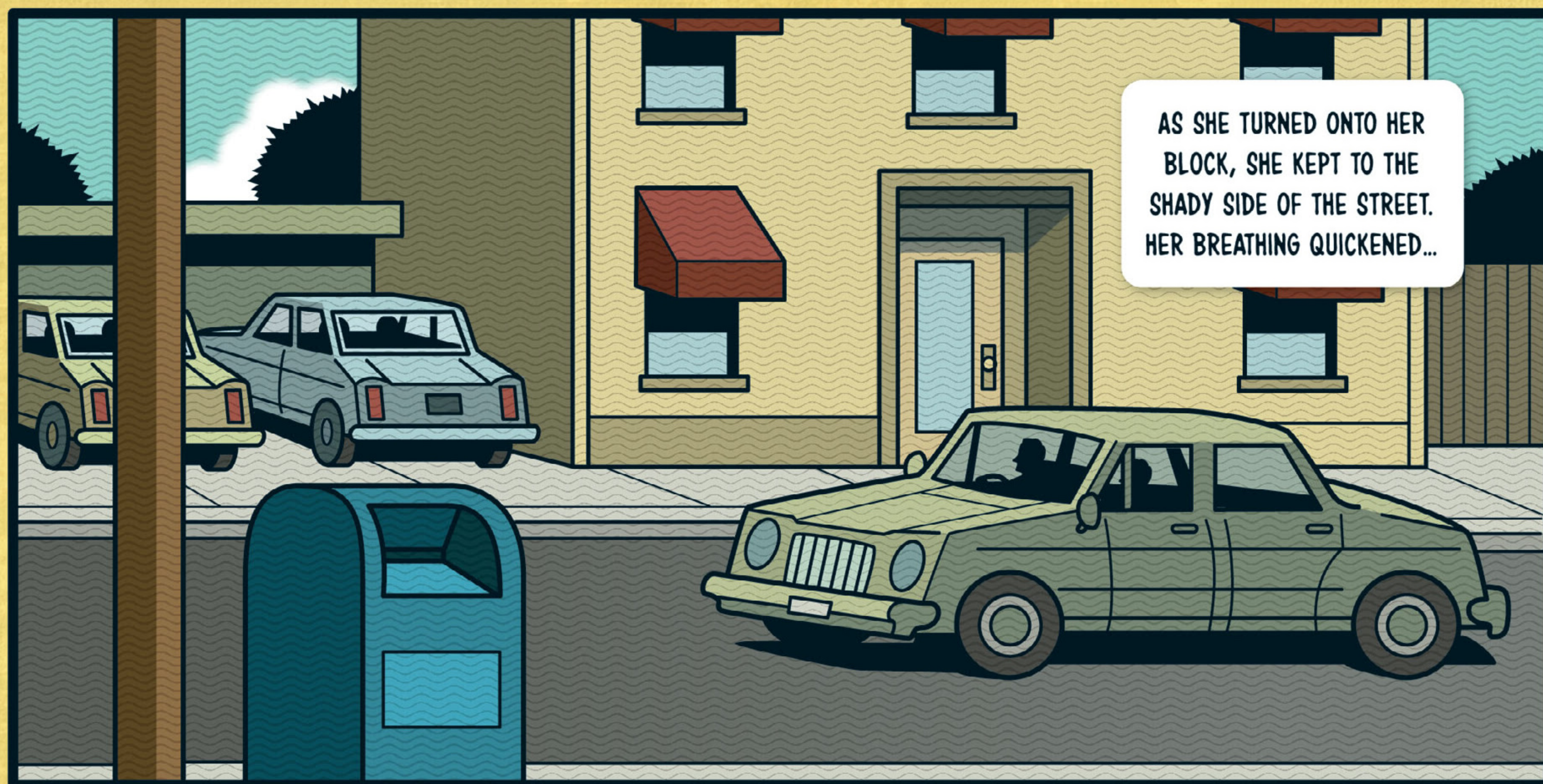




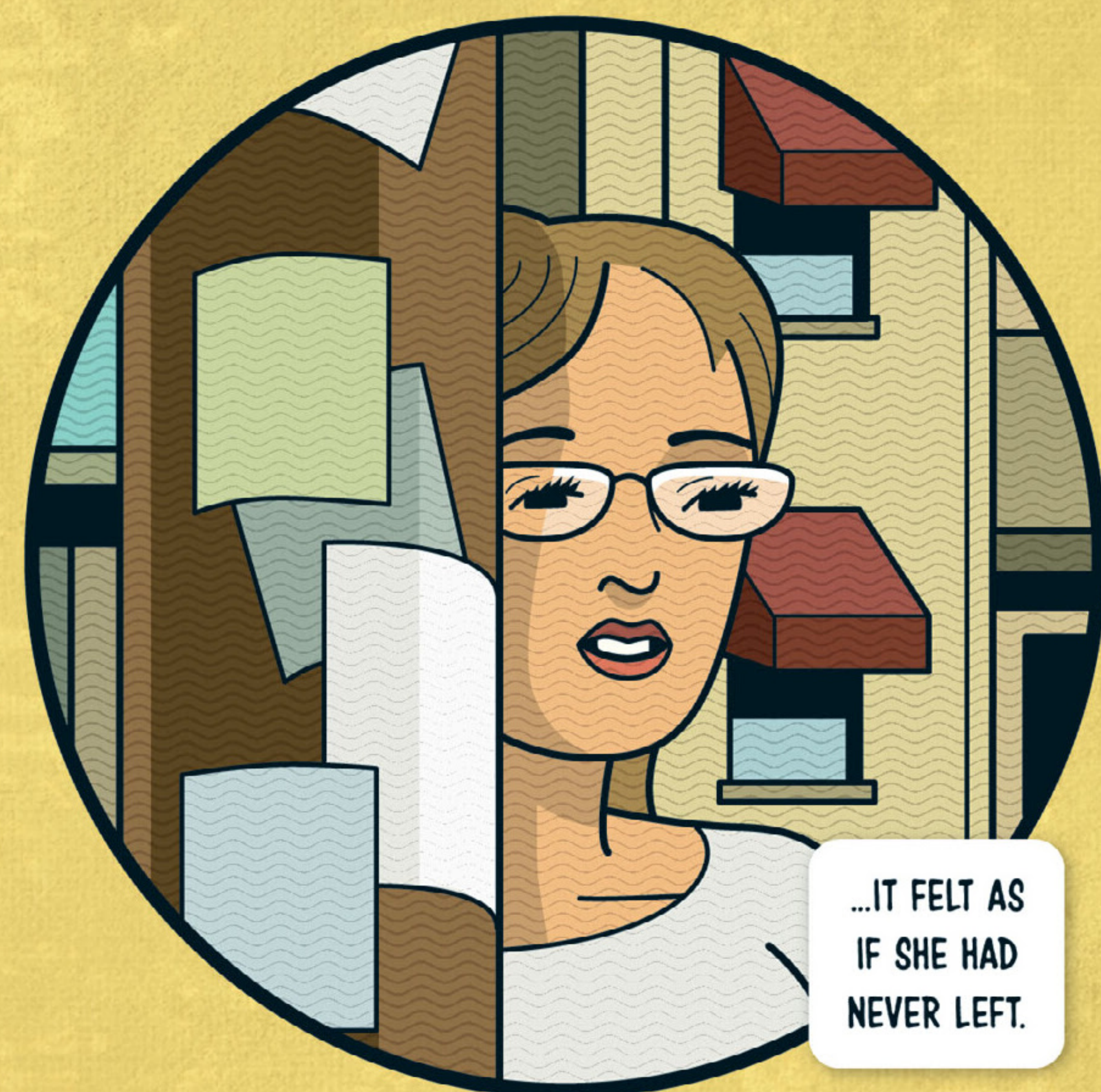
SHE PULLED THE CORD FOR THE FRANKLIN AVENUE STOP. IT FELT STRANGE GETTING OFF THE BUS IN HER OLD NEIGHBORHOOD. THE SAME STORES AND DRAB HOUSES. NOTHING HAD CHANGED, EXCEPT HER. IT FELT OTHERWORLDLY.



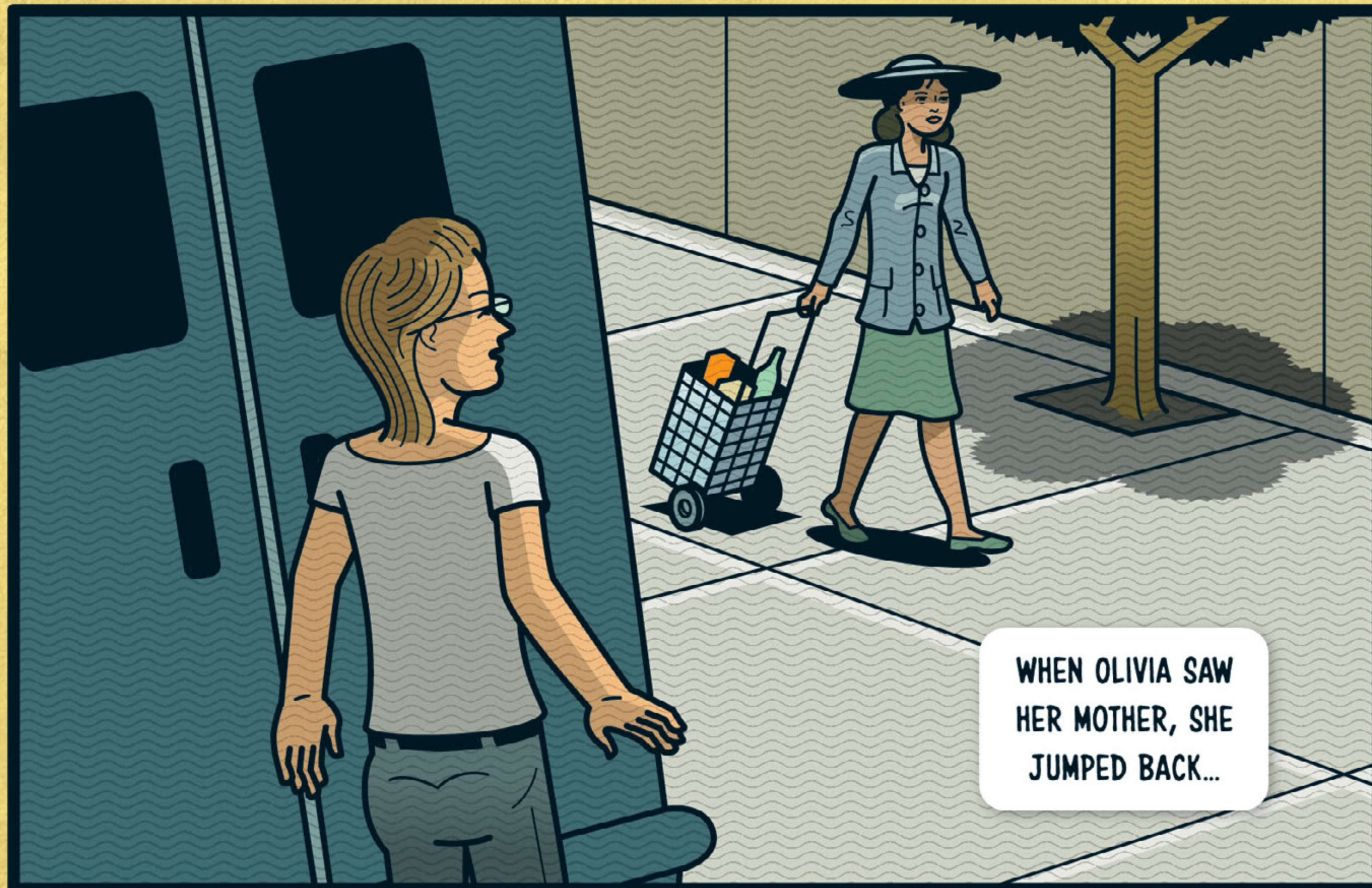
SHE HELD HER HEAD DOWN AND WALKED QUICKLY ALONG THE EDGE OF THE PARK. SHE WANTED TO AVOID RUNNING INTO SOMEONE SHE KNEW.



AS SHE TURNED ONTO HER BLOCK, SHE KEPT TO THE SHADY SIDE OF THE STREET. HER BREATHING QUICKENED...



...IT FELT AS IF SHE HAD NEVER LEFT.



WHEN OLIVIA SAW
HER MOTHER, SHE
JUMPED BACK...



...AND WATCHED
AS SHE ENTERED
THEIR BUILDING.



SHE THEN
TURNED AROUND
AND HEADED
BACK.



THE BUS WAS NEARLY
EMPTY, AND IT RATTLED
AS IT WENT DOWN
THE STREET. OLIVIA
PULLED THE CORD
FOR HER STOP.



THANKS.

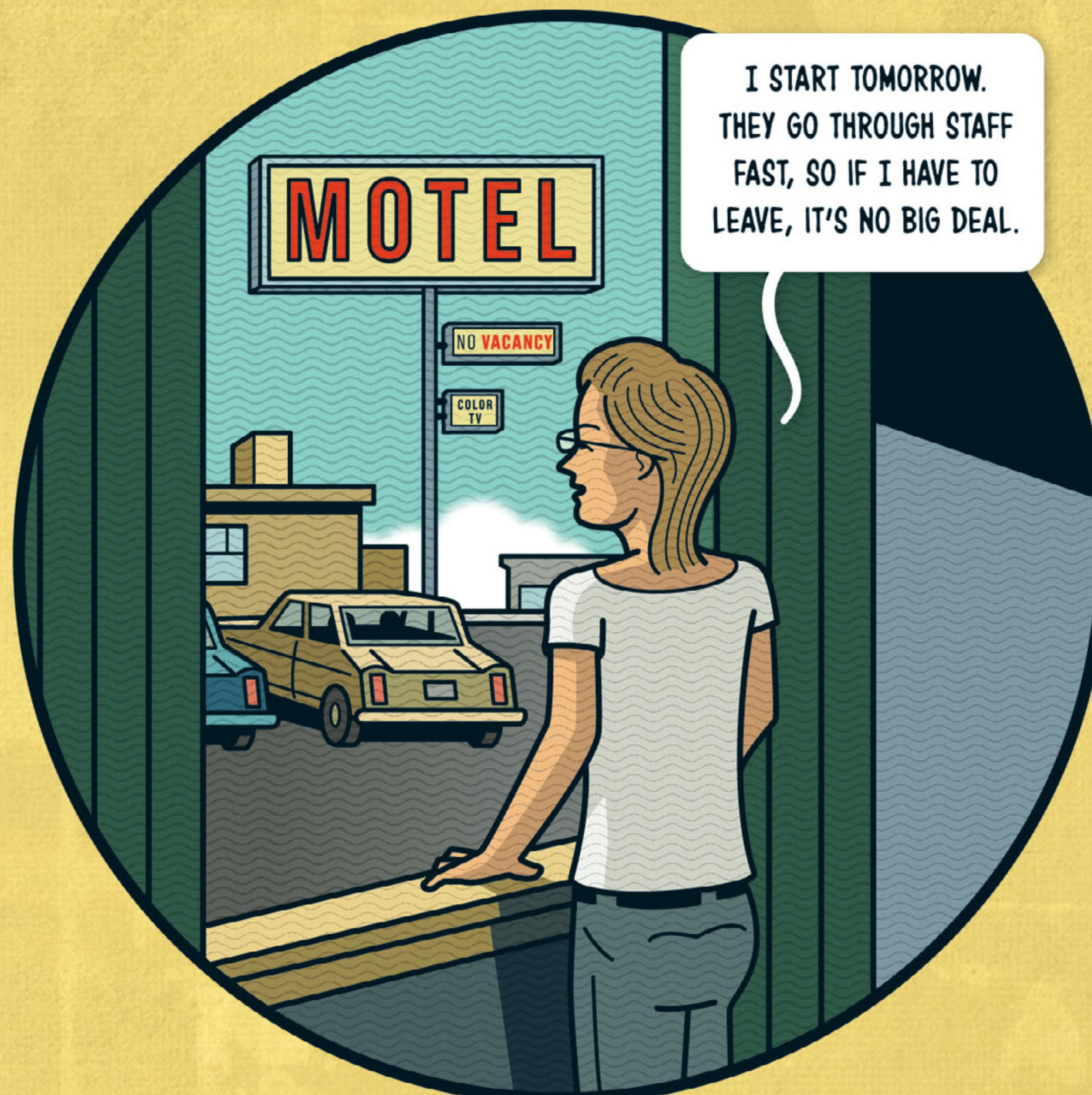


SHE RAPPED LIGHTLY ON THE DOOR.
SHE HEARD THE CHAIN DROP AND
SAW JIM'S FACE AS HE OPENED UP.
HE WAS SMILING.

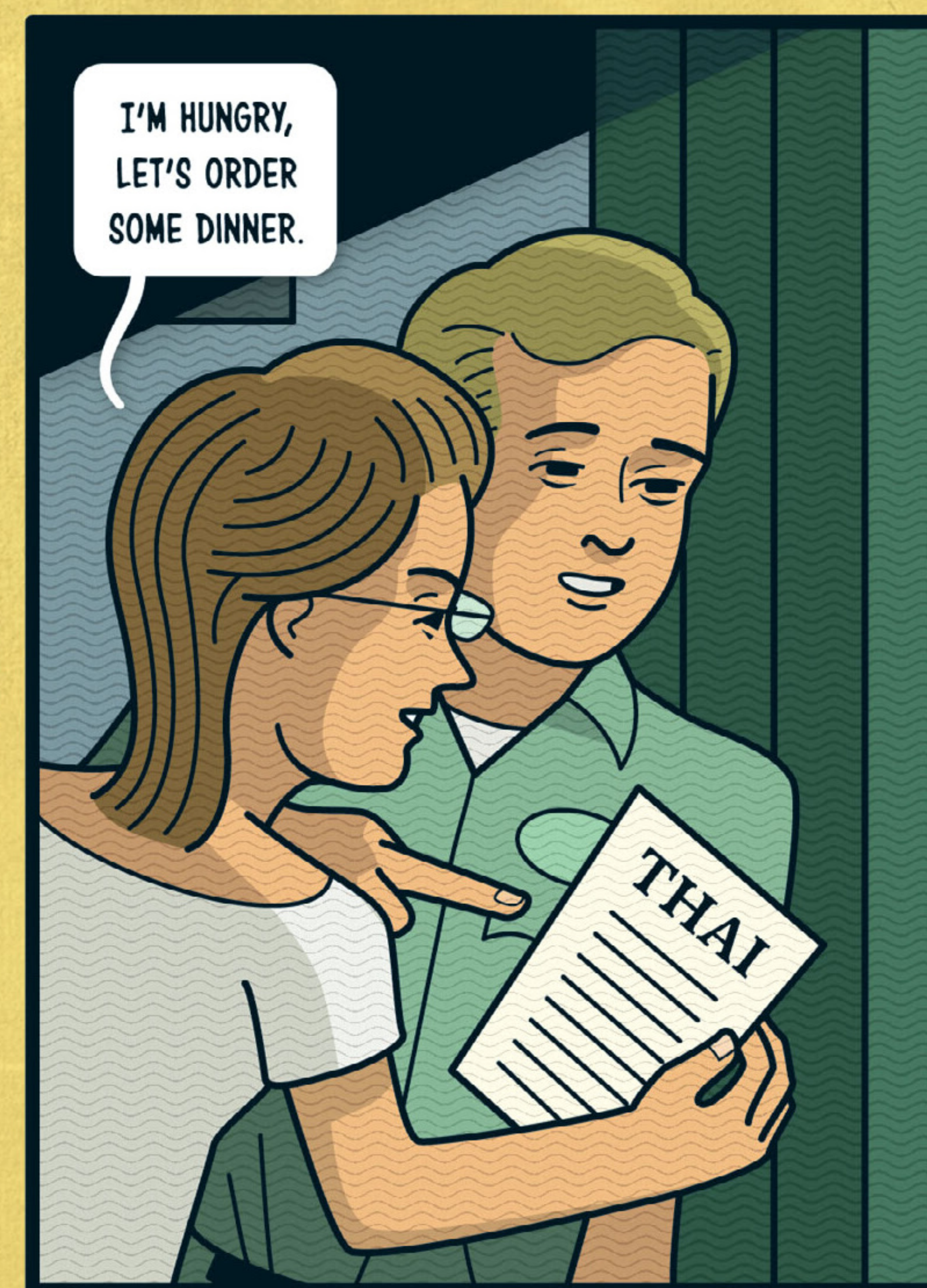
I ALREADY PUT IN HALF
A DAY AT THE SHELL ON
FIGUEROA. THEY WERE
SHORTHANDED AND
GLAD TO SEE ME.
LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BE
A REGULAR JOB, FIVE
DAYS A WEEK, UNDER
THE TABLE. HOW DID
IT GO FOR YOU?



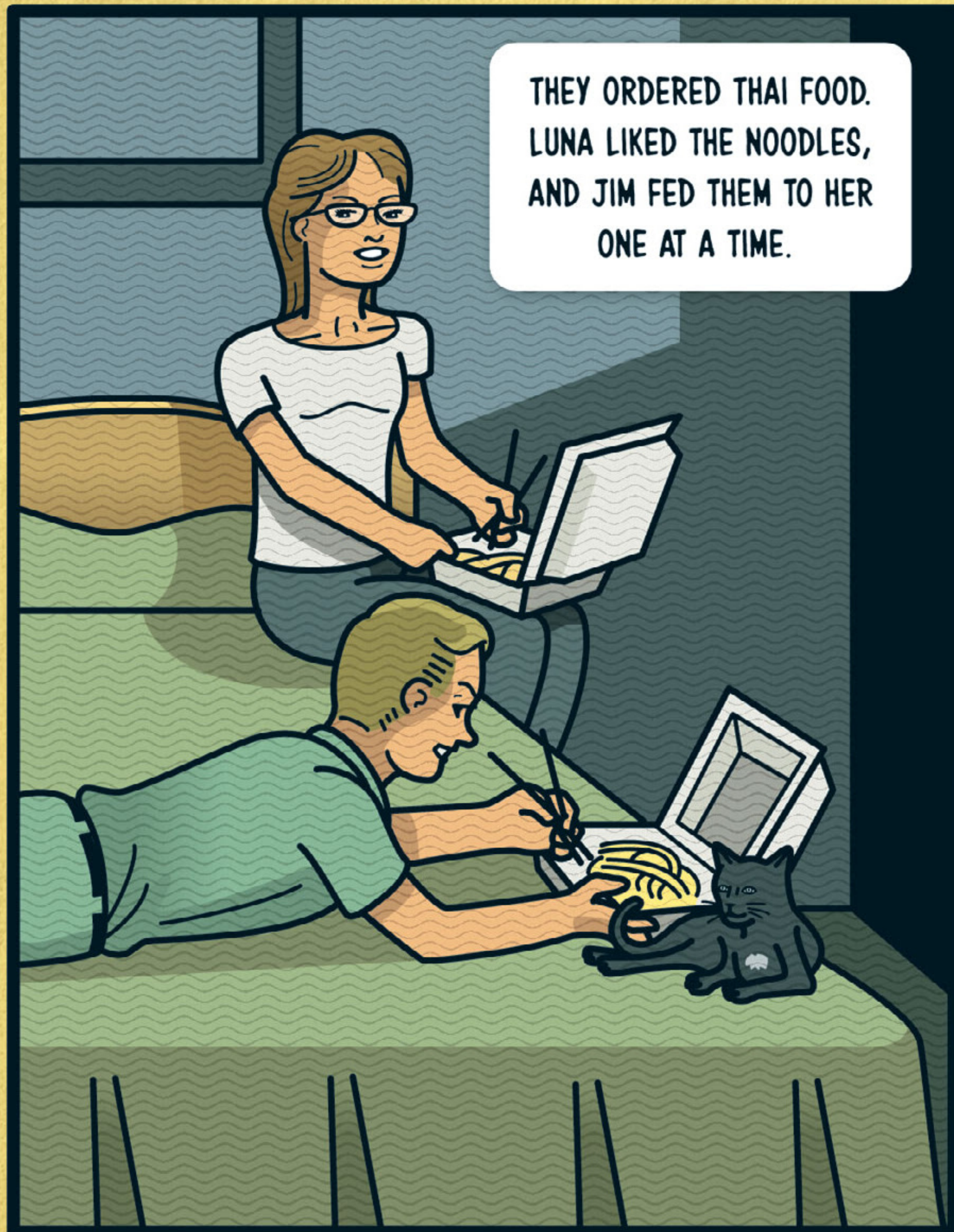
THE "COUNTRY KITCHEN" ON WESTERN.
WAITING TABLES, THREE DAYS A WEEK.



I START TOMORROW.
THEY GO THROUGH STAFF
FAST, SO IF I HAVE TO
LEAVE, IT'S NO BIG DEAL.



I'M HUNGRY,
LET'S ORDER
SOME DINNER.



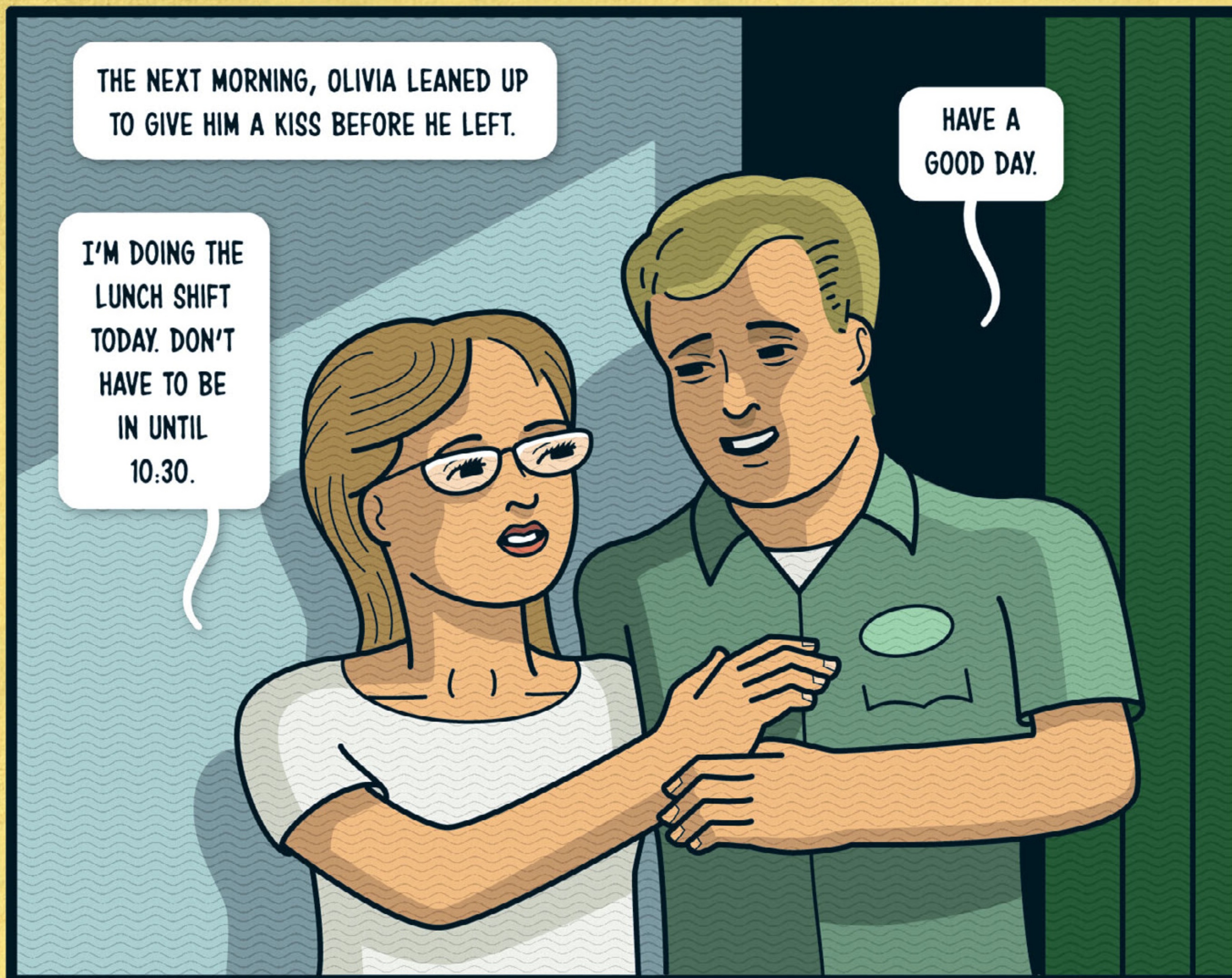
THEY ORDERED THAI FOOD. LUNA LIKED THE NOODLES, AND JIM FED THEM TO HER ONE AT A TIME.



THE THREE OF THEM LAY ON THE BED AND LOOKED OUT AT THE NIGHT SKY.



THAT NIGHT, JIM AND OLIVIA BECAME LOVERS. IT FELT GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE LIVING WORLD, FEELING THE SUN ON YOUR SKIN AND THE BREEZE IN THE AIR. THEY WERE BOTH HAPPY AND RELAXED.

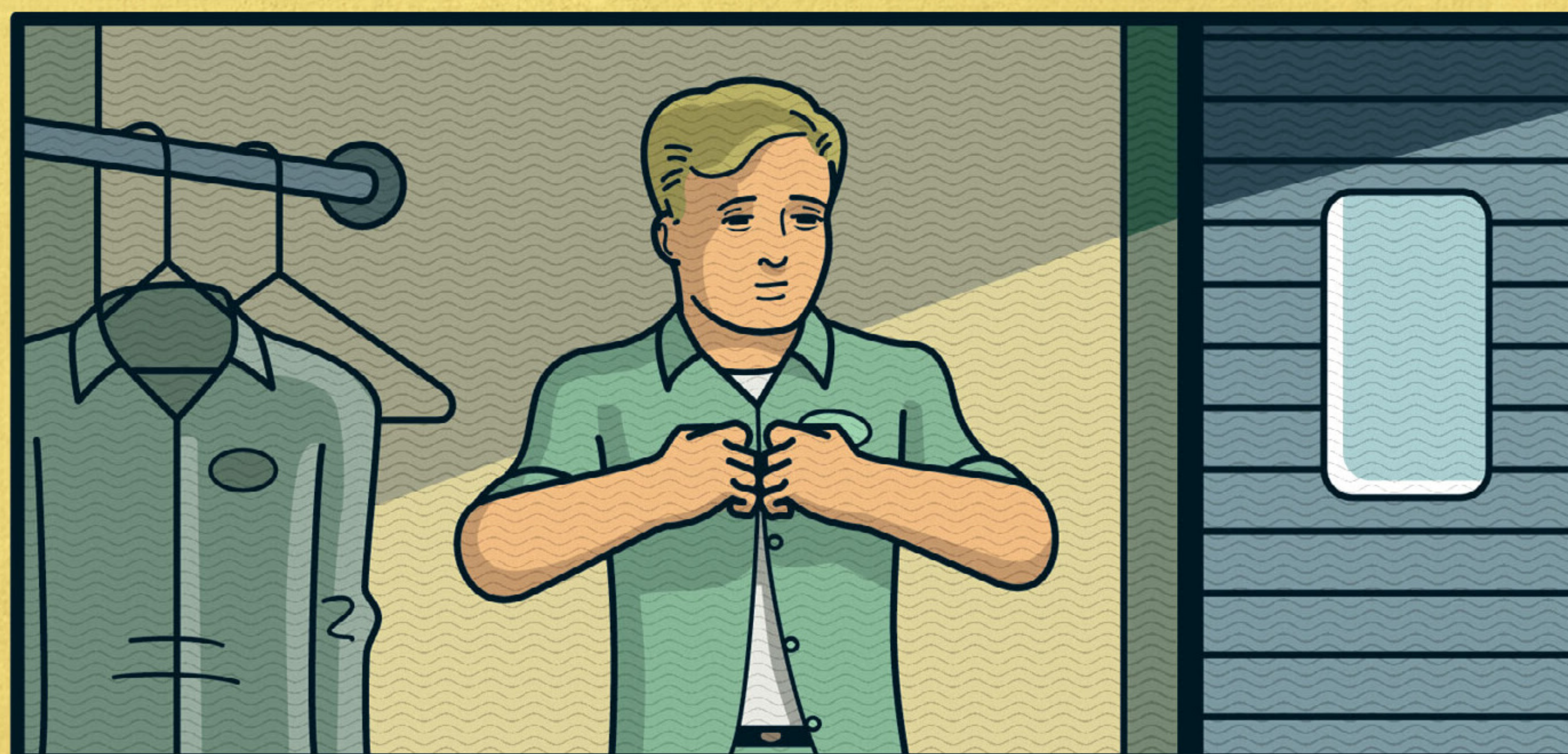
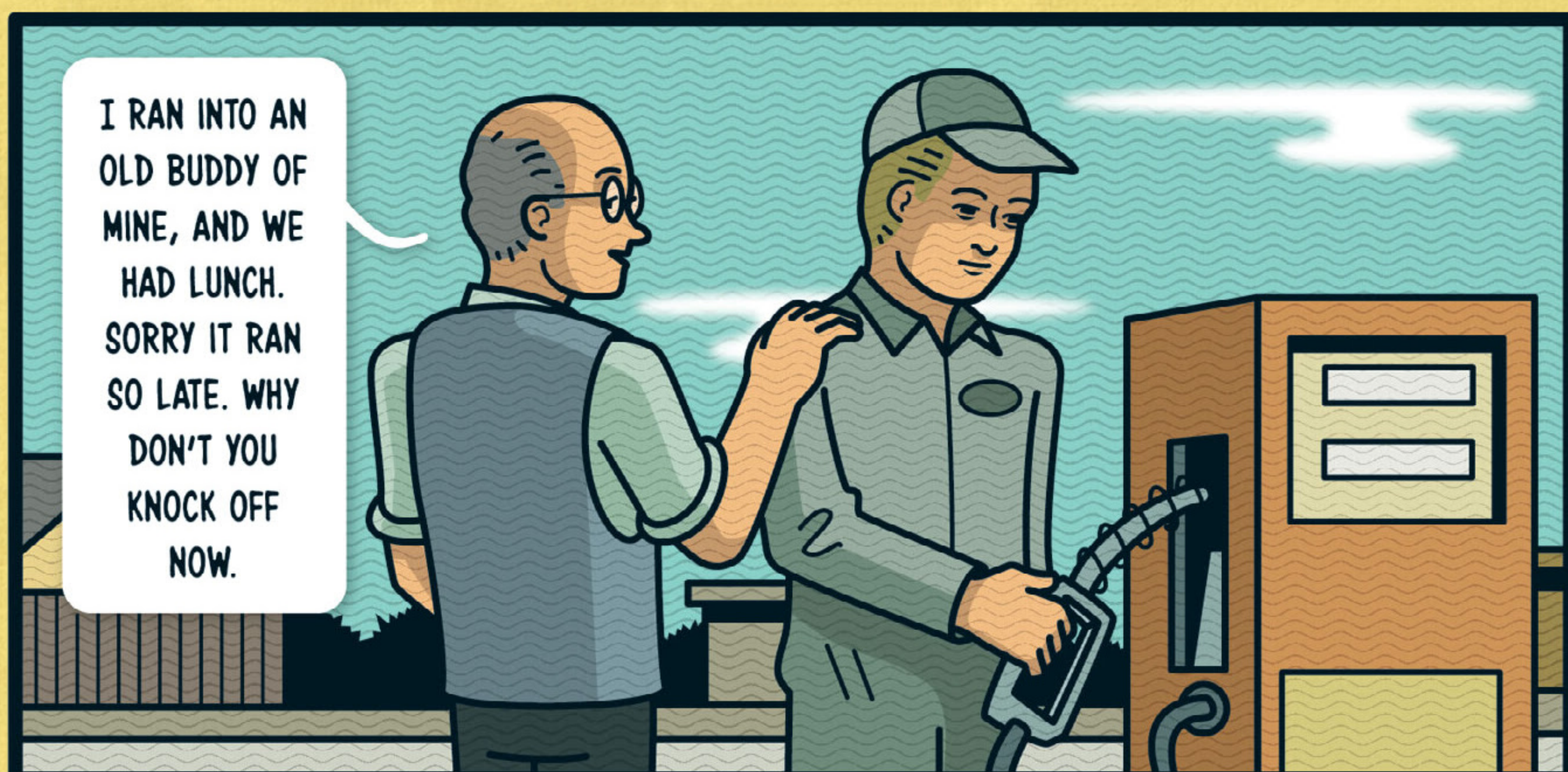
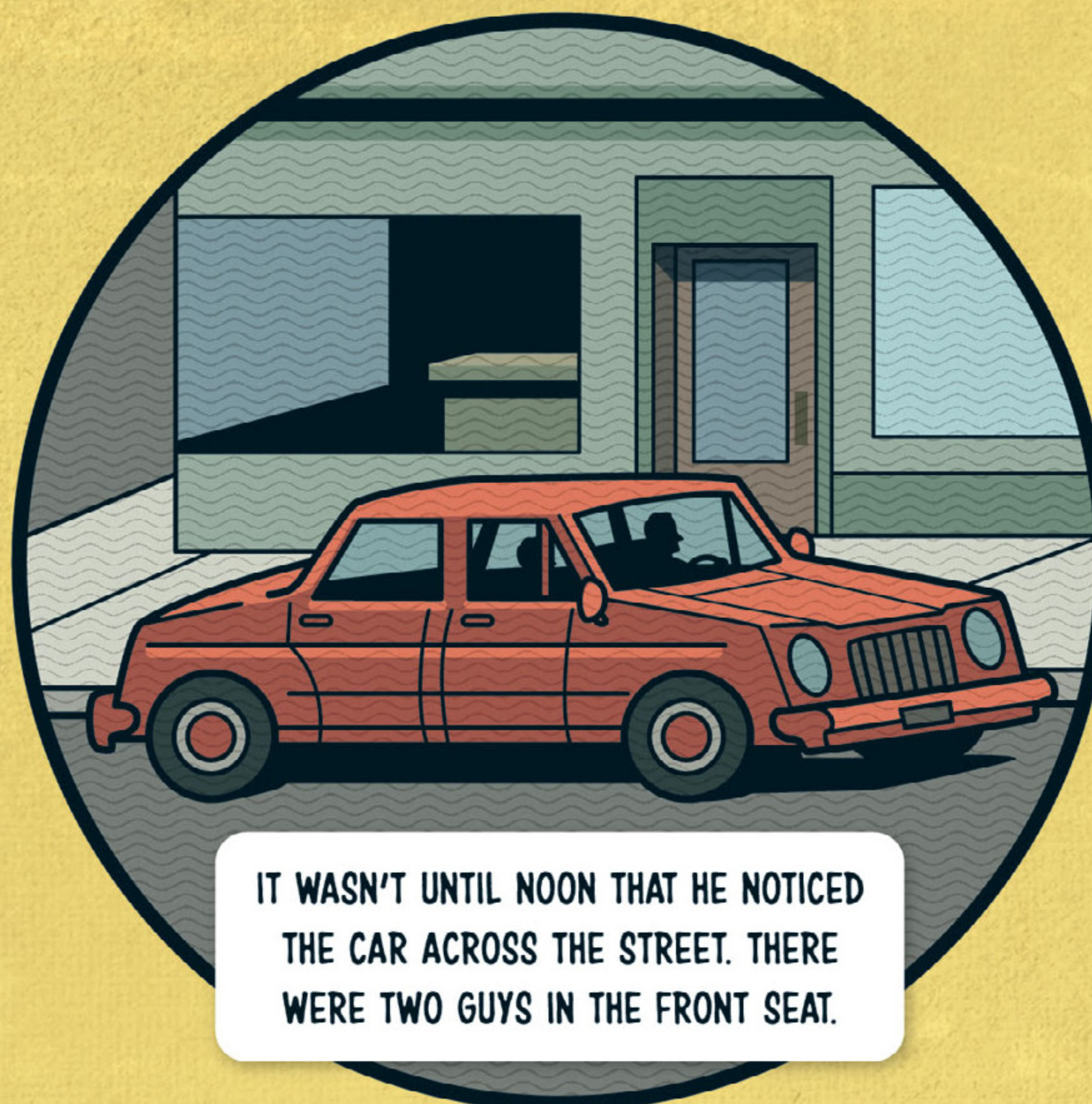
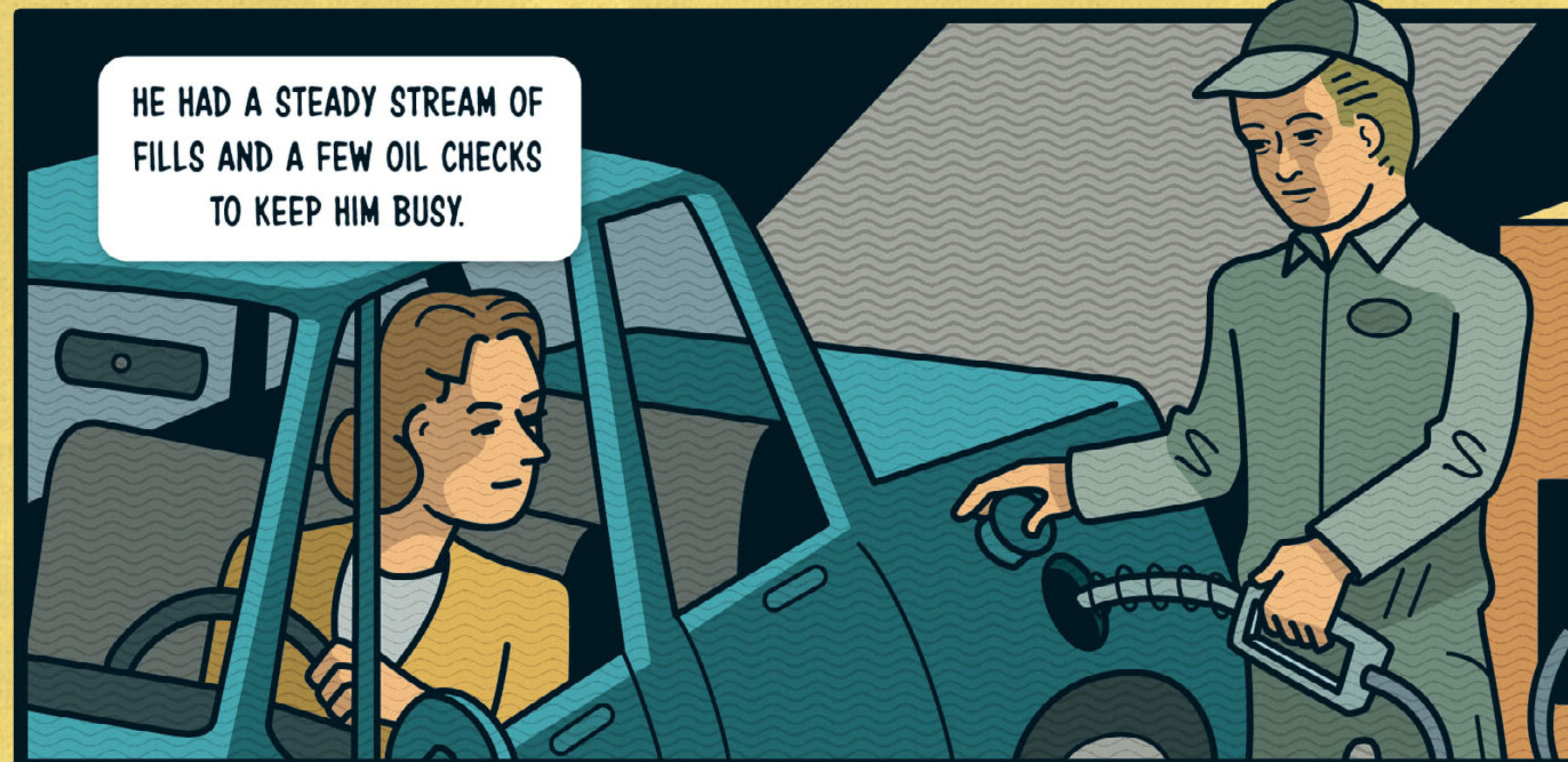
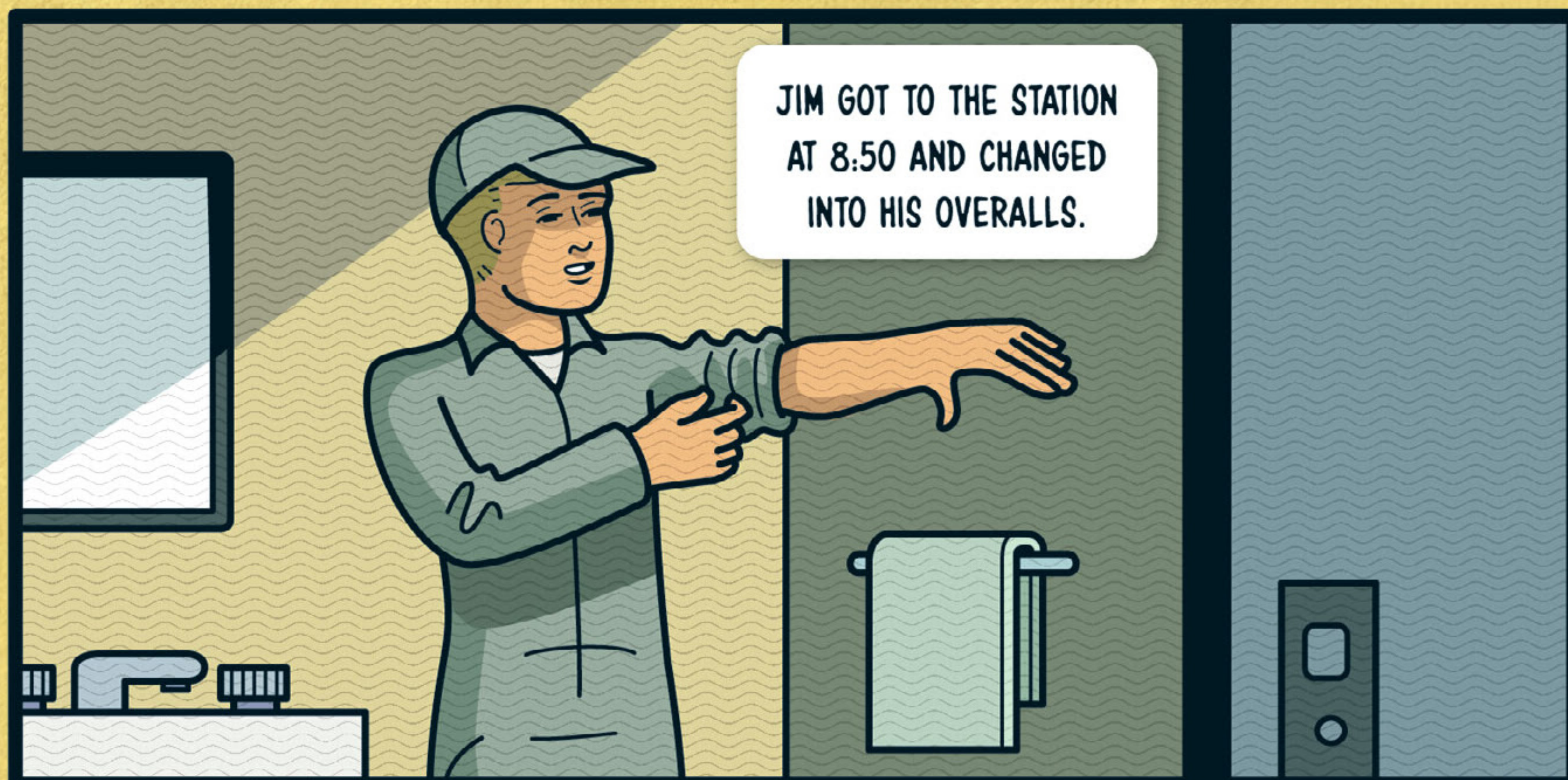


THE NEXT MORNING, OLIVIA LEANED UP TO GIVE HIM A KISS BEFORE HE LEFT.

I'M DOING THE LUNCH SHIFT TODAY. DON'T HAVE TO BE IN UNTIL 10:30.

HAVE A GOOD DAY.



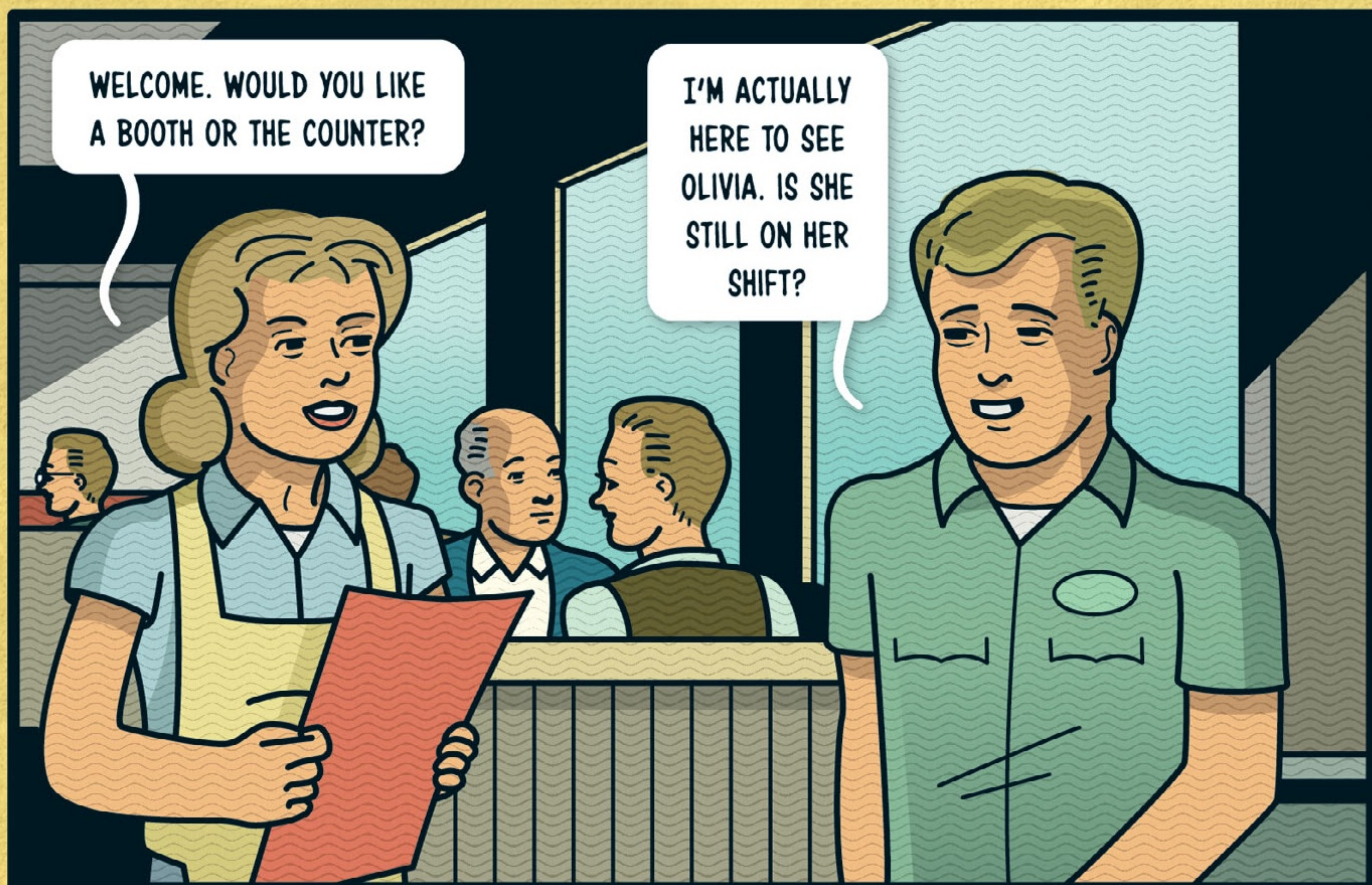


THE TWO MEN WATCHING HIM HAD LEFT HIM UNNERVED. HE DECIDED TO GO GET OLIVIA. THEY'D HEAD BACK TO THE MOTEL, PACK UP, AND LEAVE.

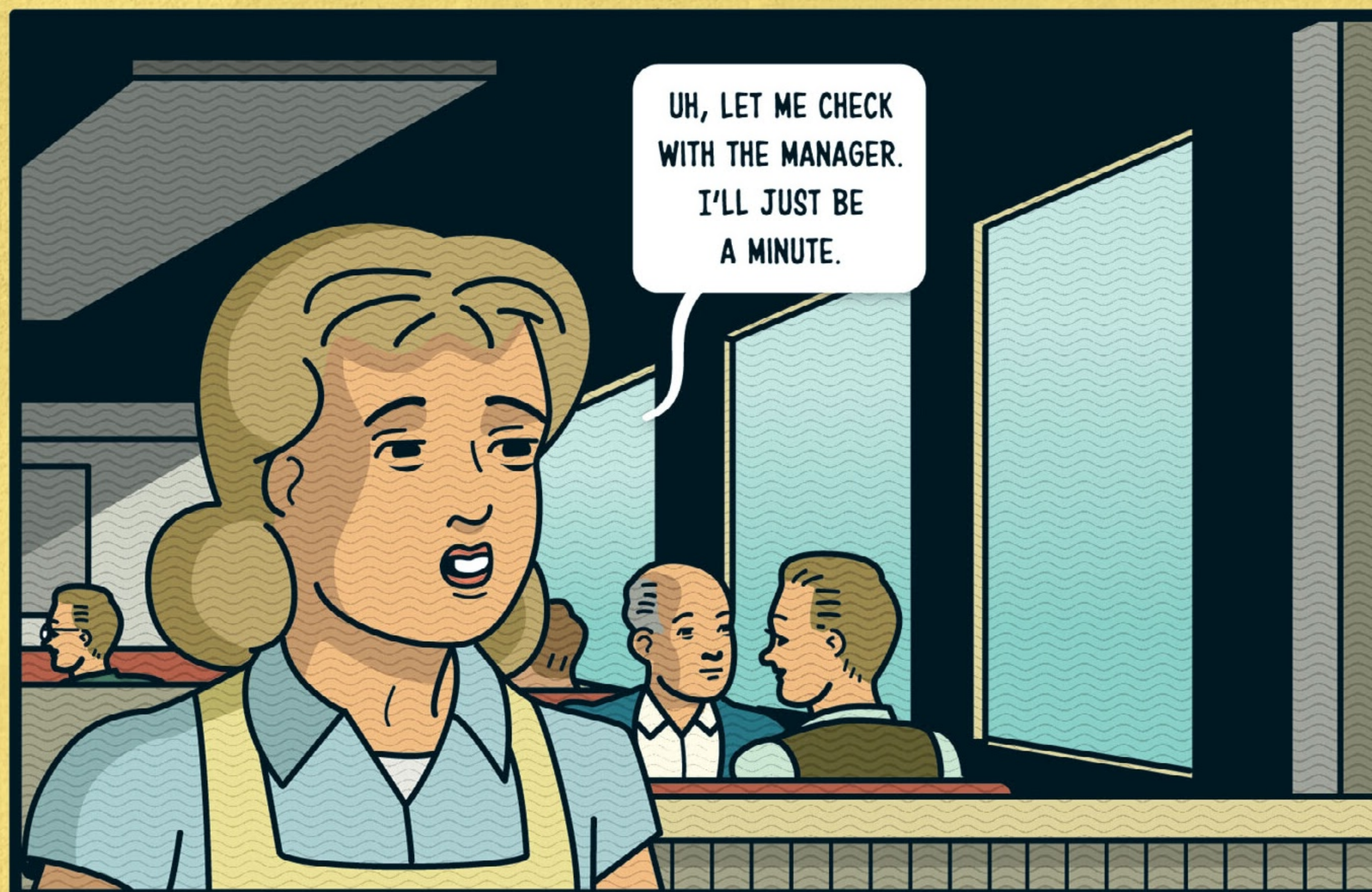


WELCOME. WOULD YOU LIKE A BOOTH OR THE COUNTER?

I'M ACTUALLY HERE TO SEE OLIVIA. IS SHE STILL ON HER SHIFT?



UH, LET ME CHECK WITH THE MANAGER. I'LL JUST BE A MINUTE.



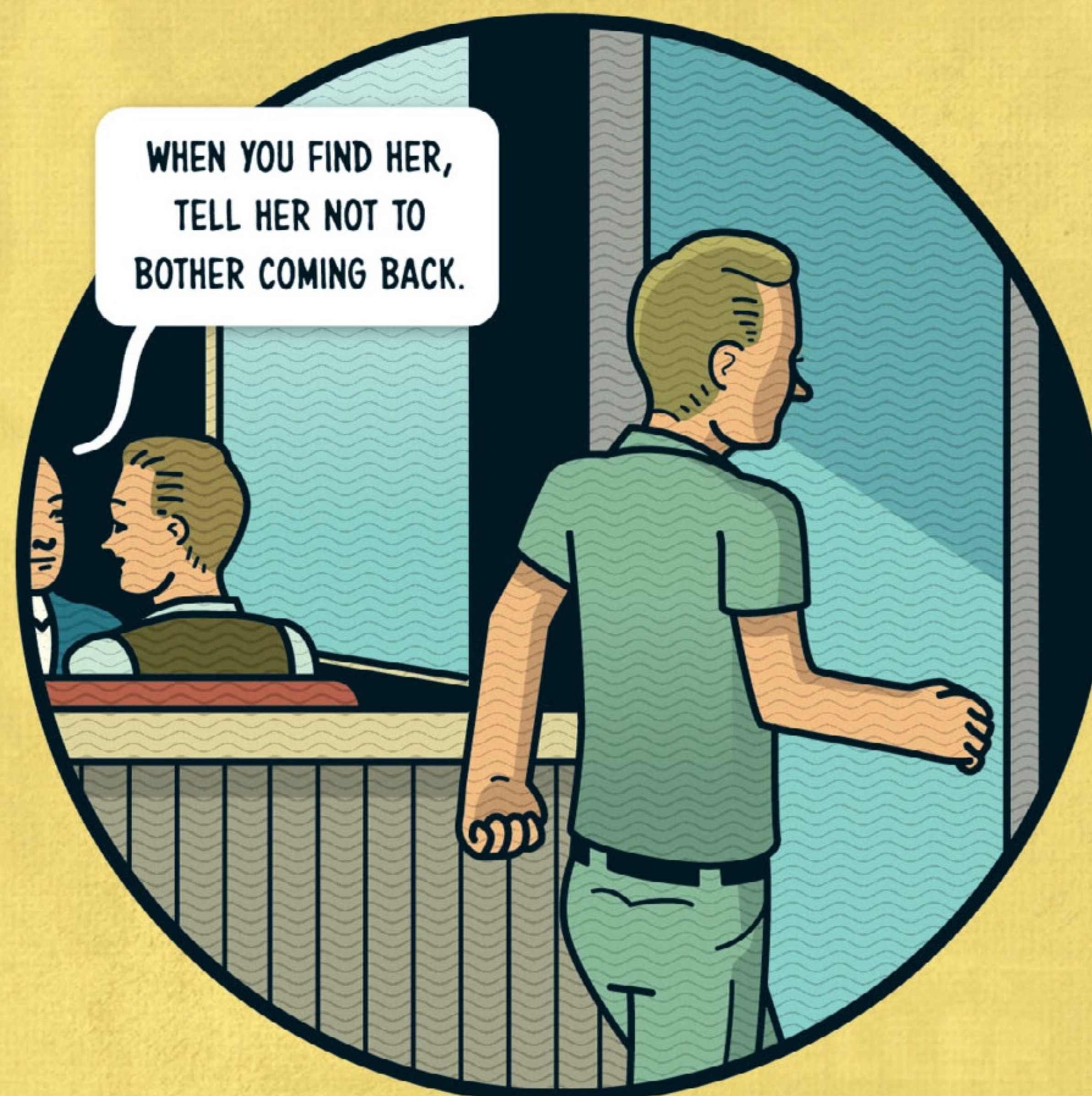
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR OLIVIA?



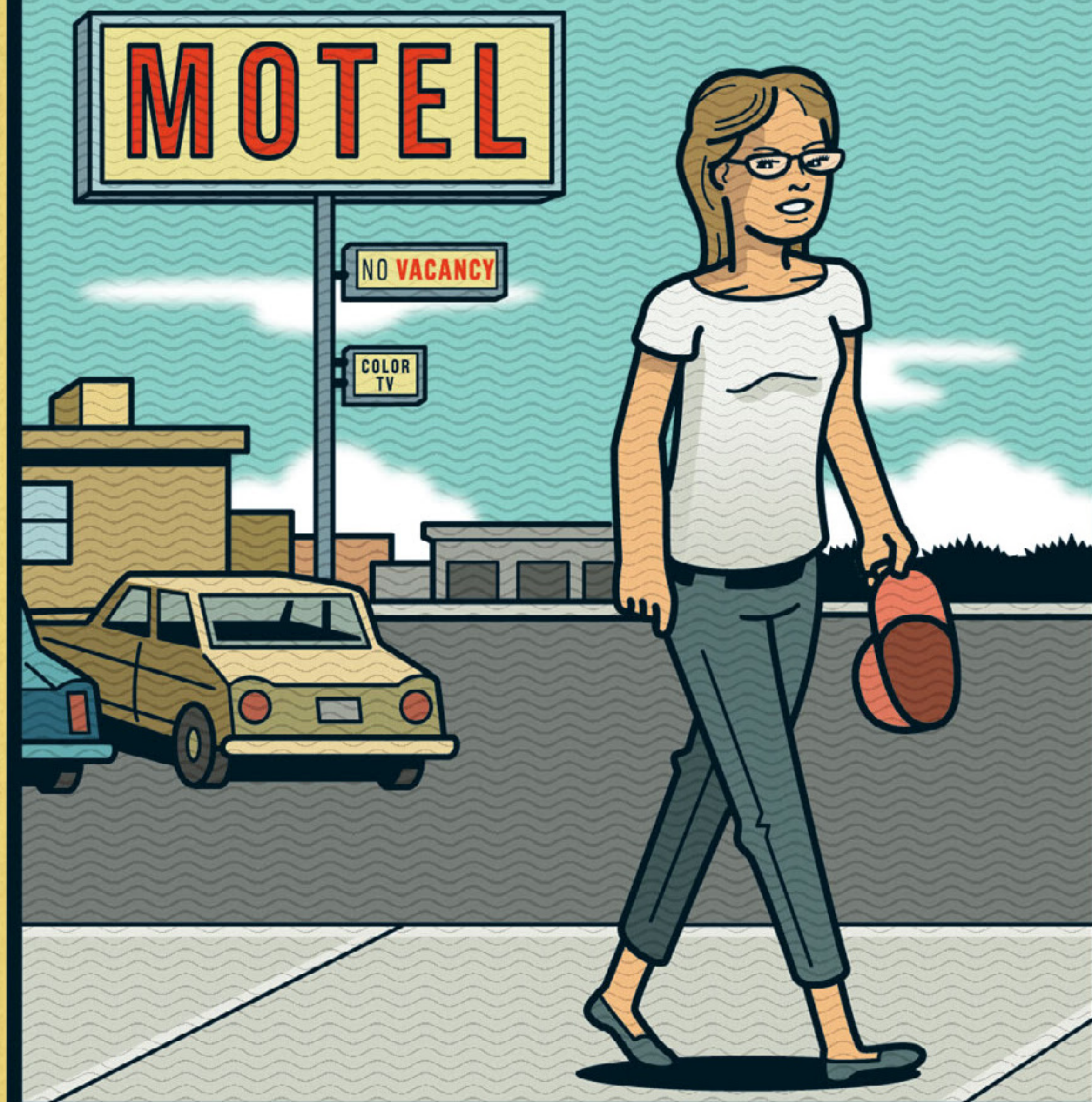
SO AM I. SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO START TODAY, BUT SHE NEVER SHOWED.



WHEN YOU FIND HER, TELL HER NOT TO BOTHER COMING BACK.



EARLIER THAT MORNING, OLIVIA HAD LEFT THE MOTEL INTENDING TO START HER NEW JOB...



...BUT WHEN THE 6 BUS HAD PULLED UP FIRST, SHE GOT ON.



WHEN SHE GOT OFF THE BUS, SHE PUT ON A BASEBALL CAP AND SUNGLASSES TO AVOID BEING RECOGNIZED.



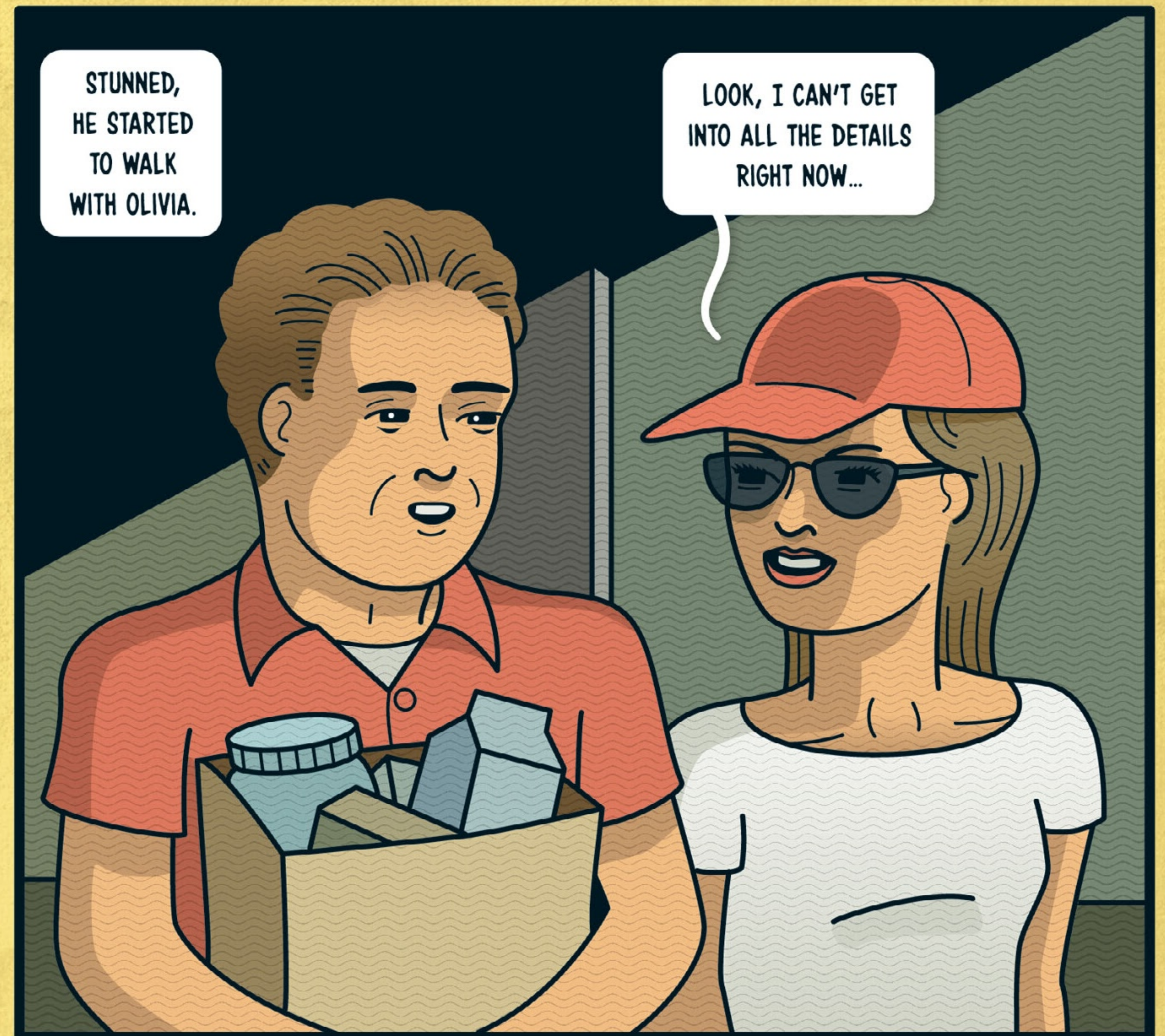
IT WAS MIDMORNING AND THE STREETS WERE FAIRLY QUIET. UNTIL...

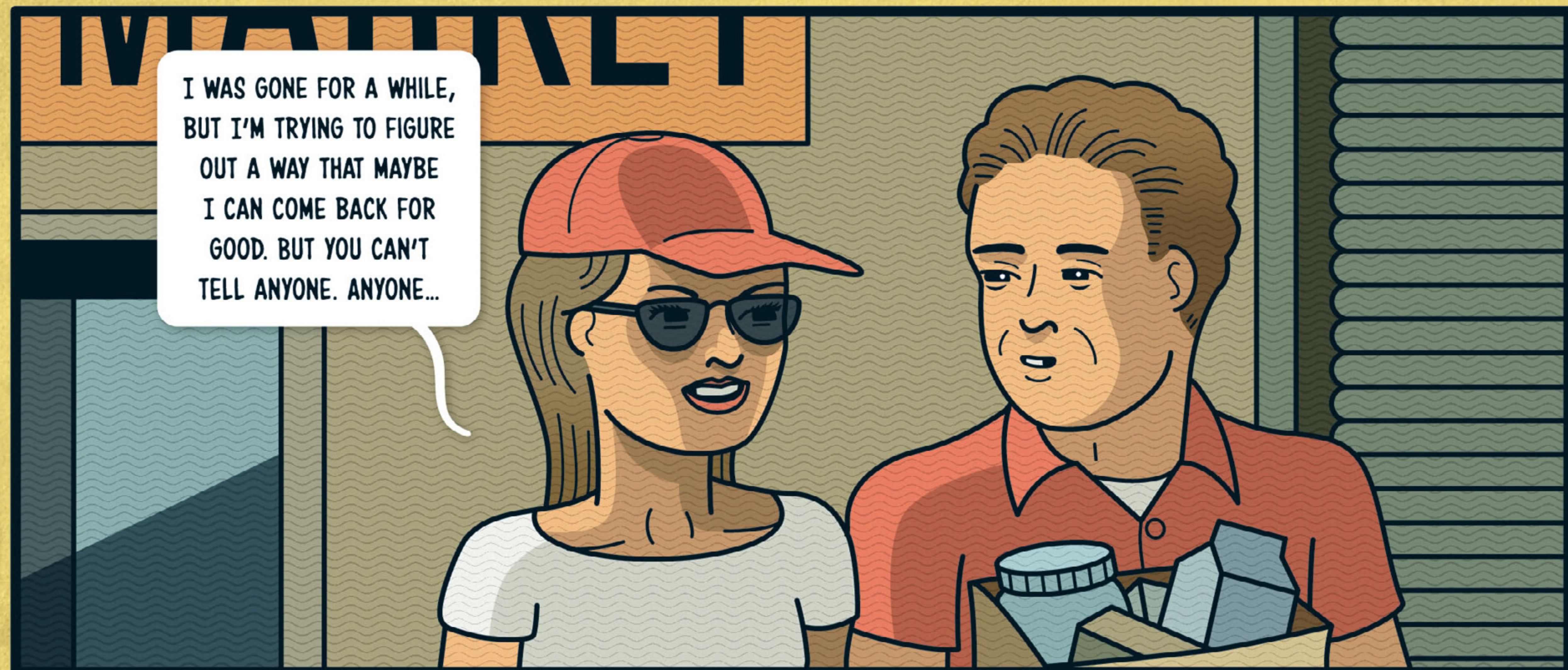


OLIVIA?



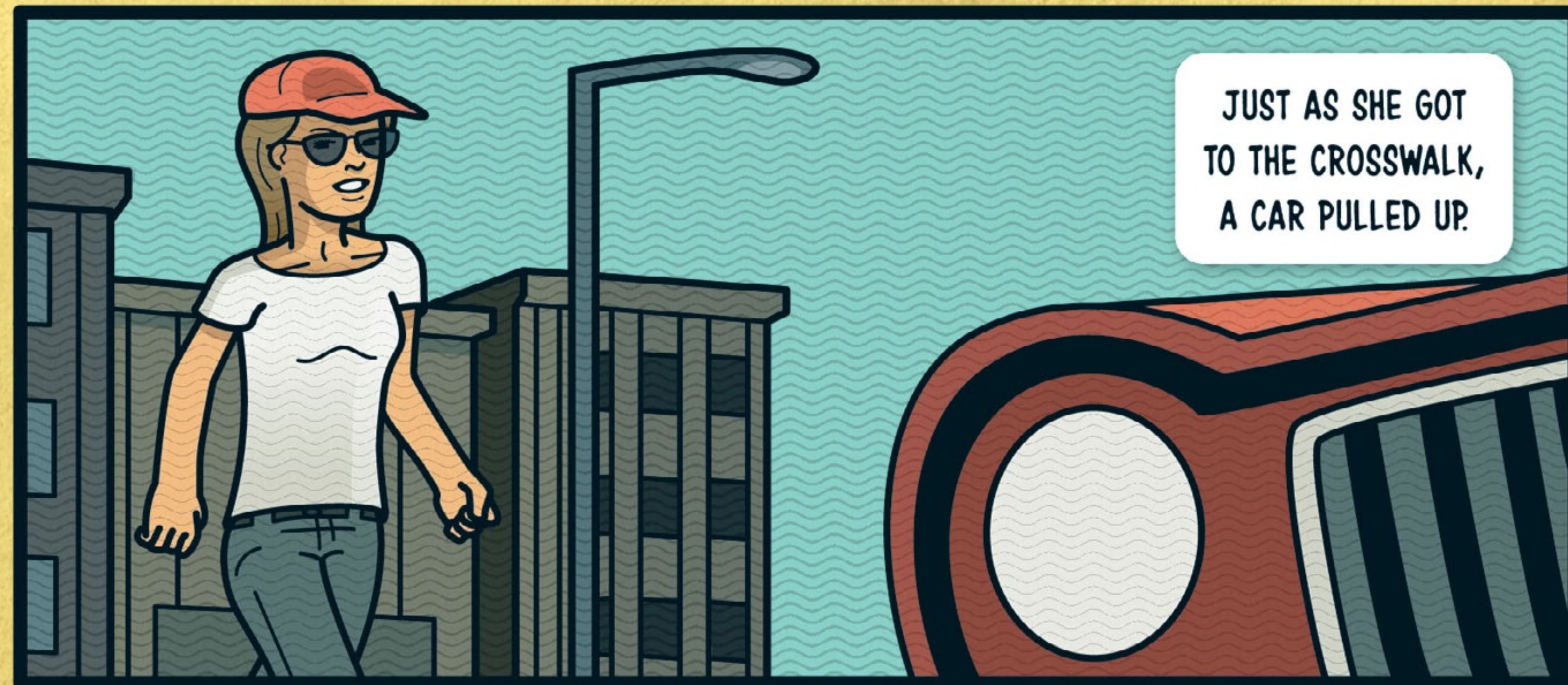
IT WAS HUGO. HE WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY OF THE CORNER MARKET, STARING AT HER.







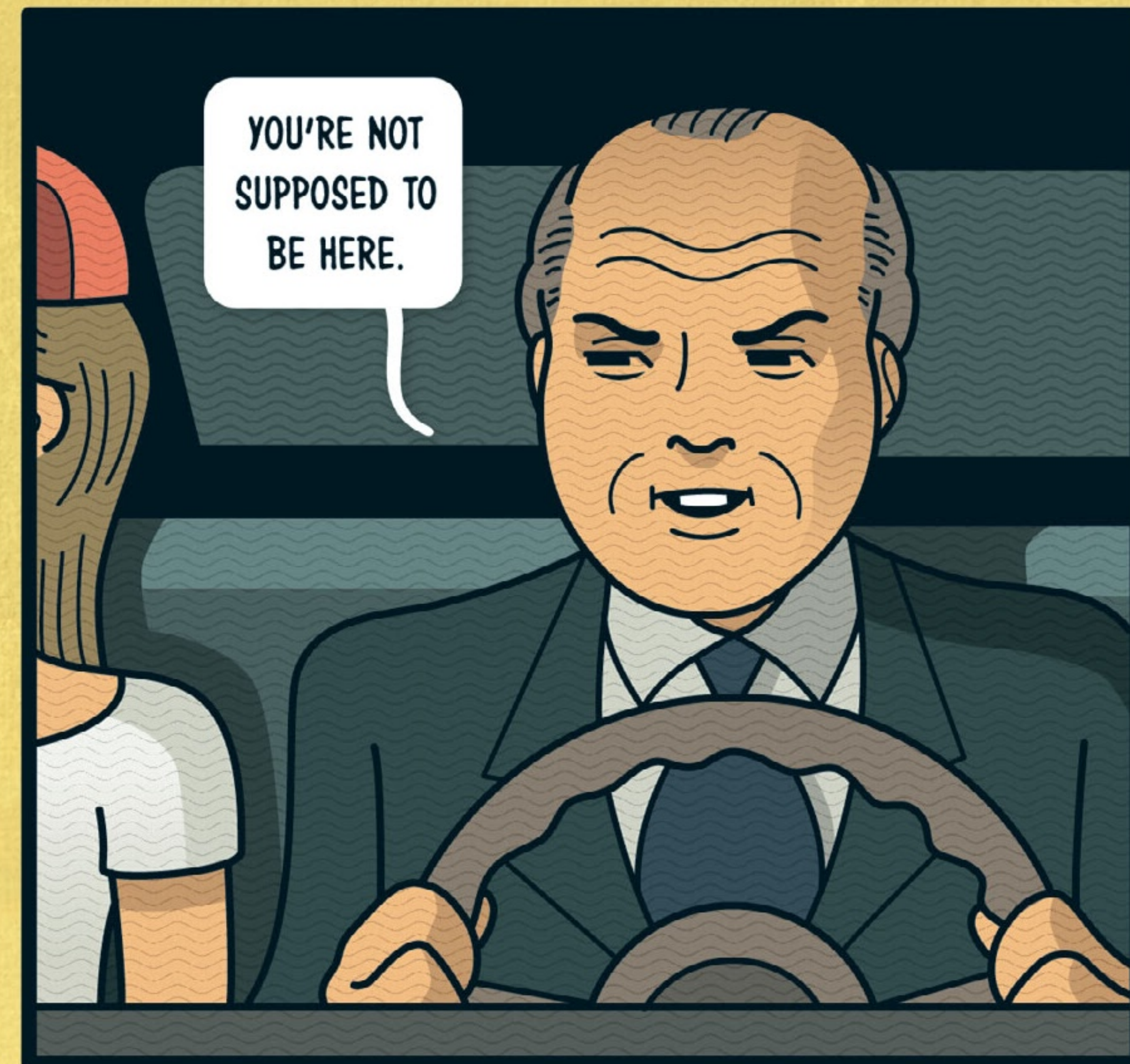
HUGO WALKED DOWN THE SIDEWALK AND TURNED LEFT AT THE CORNER. SHE WATCHED UNTIL HE DISAPPEARED.



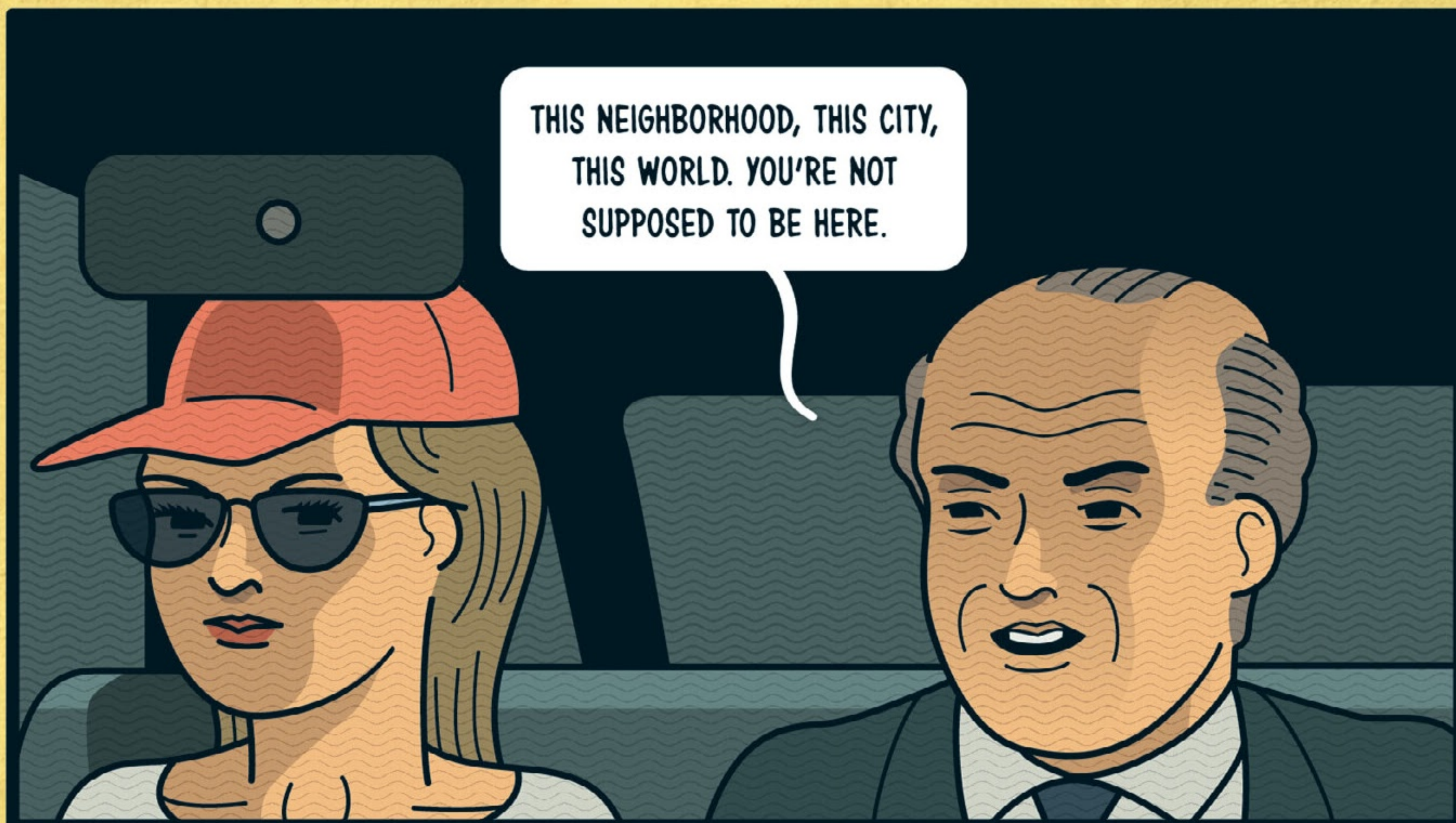
JUST AS SHE GOT TO THE CROSSWALK, A CAR PULLED UP.



GET IN. WE NEED TO TALK.



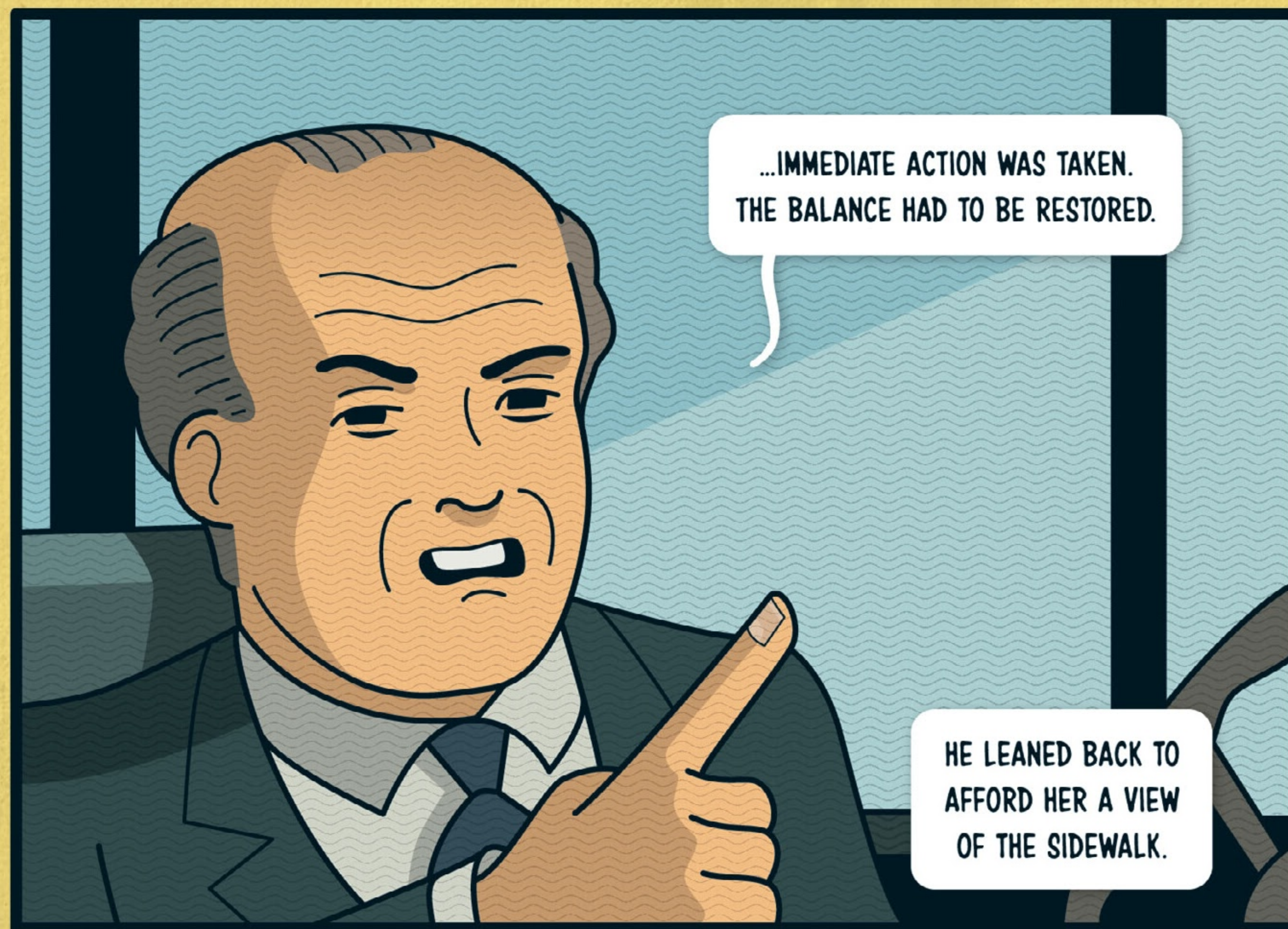
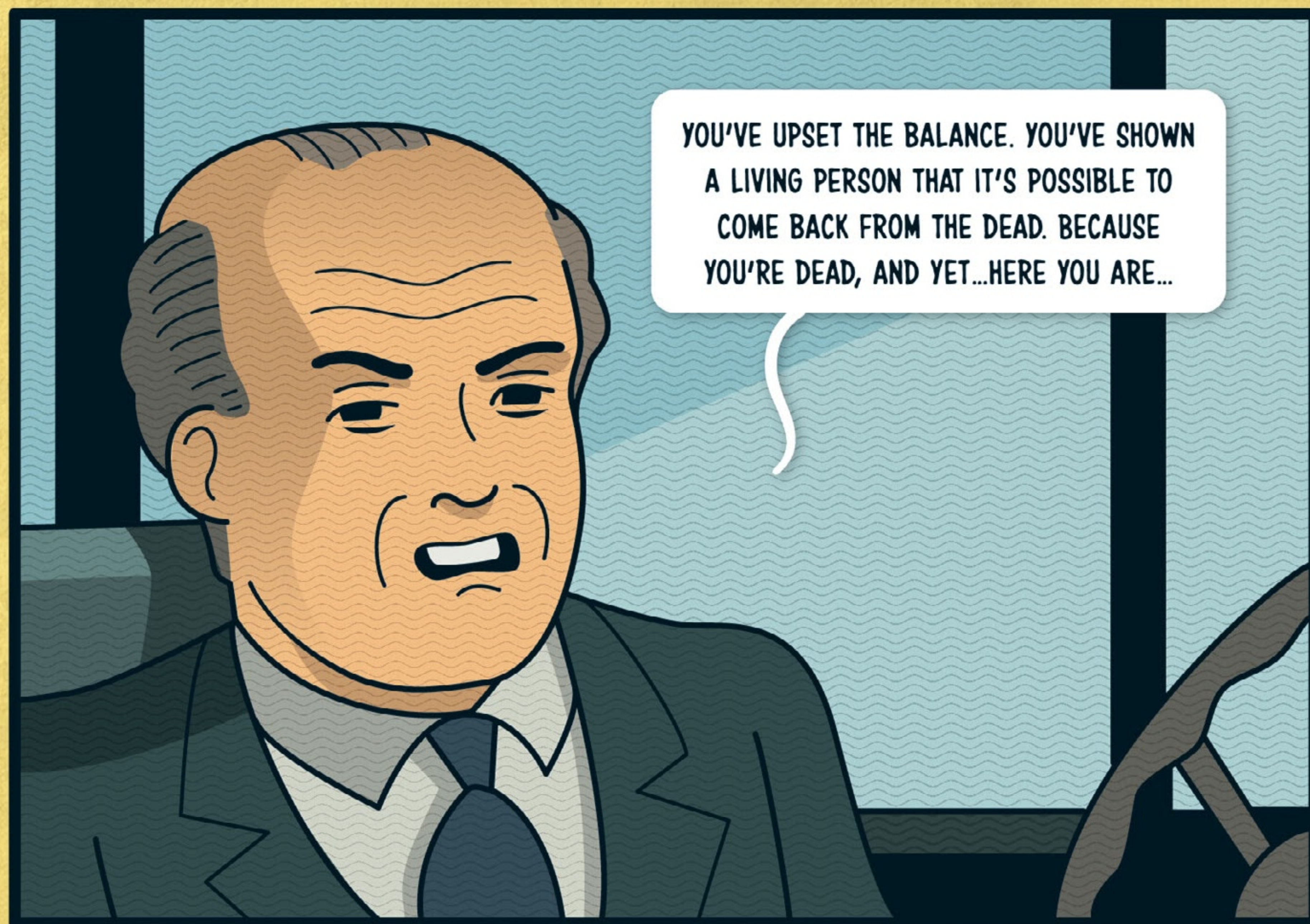
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.



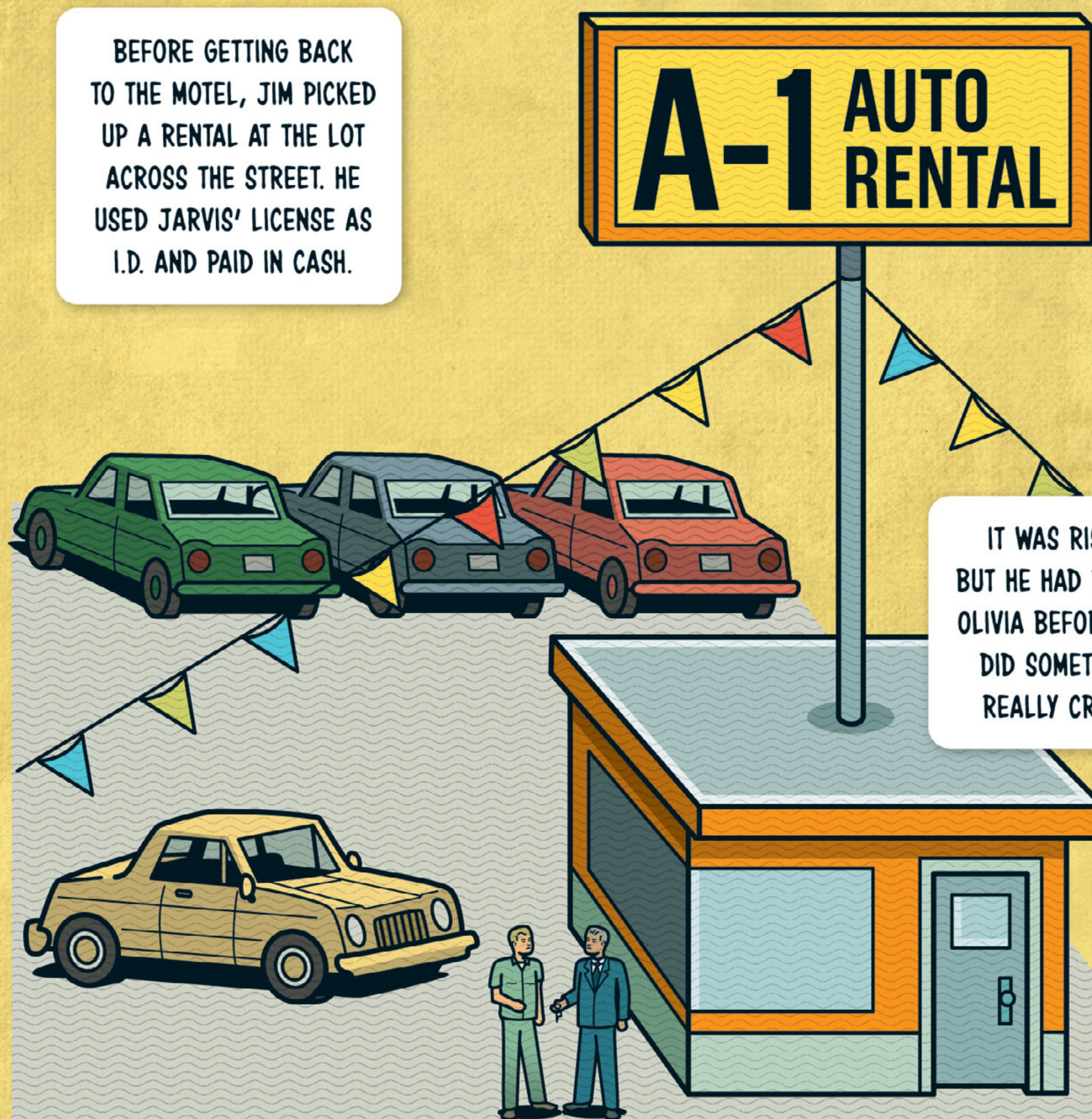
THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, THIS CITY, THIS WORLD. YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.



AND IF THAT ISN'T ENOUGH, YOU'VE CONTACTED YOUR BROTHER. HE NOW THINKS YOU'RE ALIVE, TOO. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?



BEFORE GETTING BACK TO THE MOTEL, JIM PICKED UP A RENTAL AT THE LOT ACROSS THE STREET. HE USED JARVIS' LICENSE AS I.D. AND PAID IN CASH.

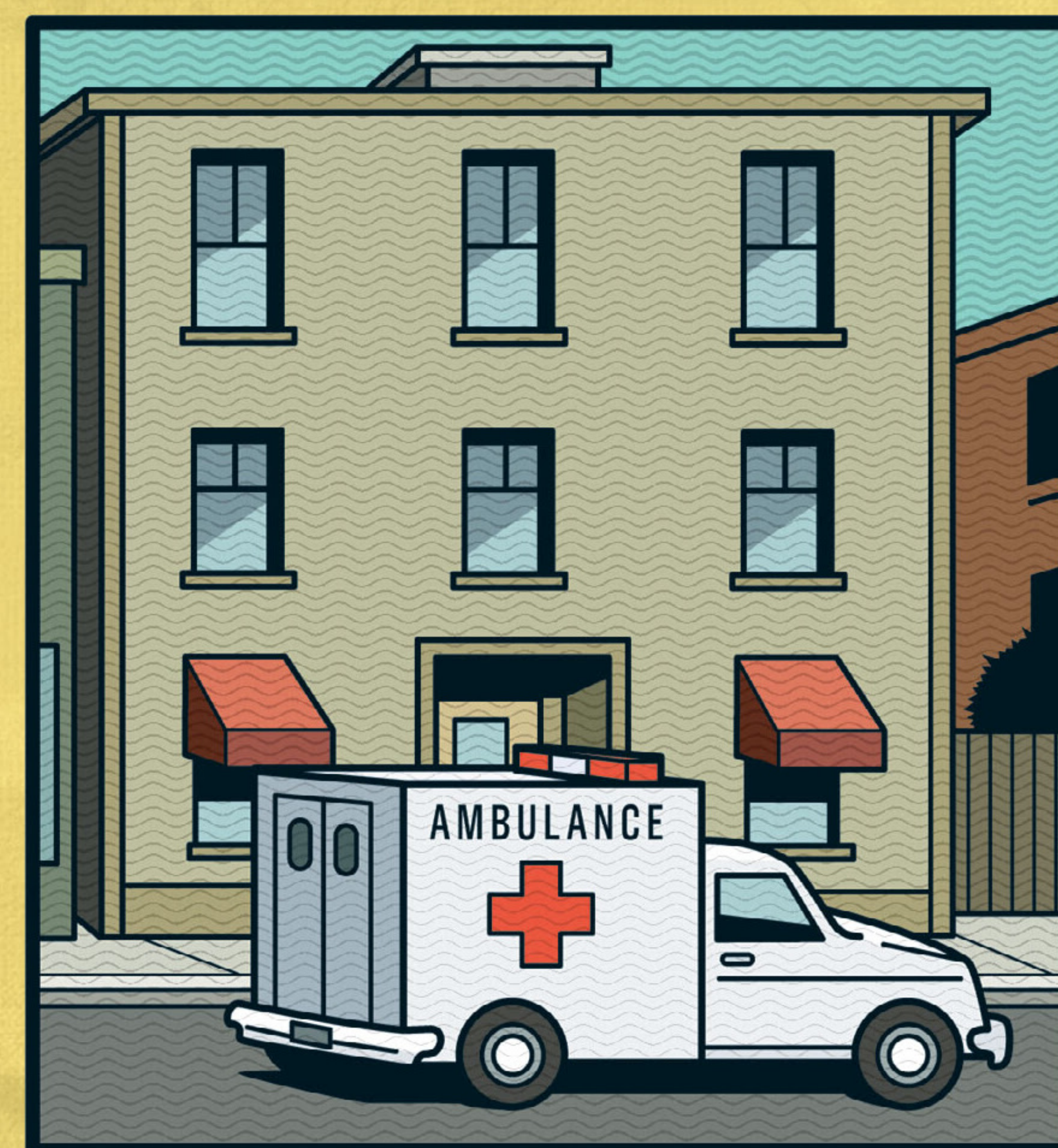


IT WAS RISKY, BUT HE HAD TO GET OLIVIA BEFORE SHE DID SOMETHING REALLY CRAZY.

HE PACKED UP EVERYTHING AT THE MOTEL AND TOOK OFF.



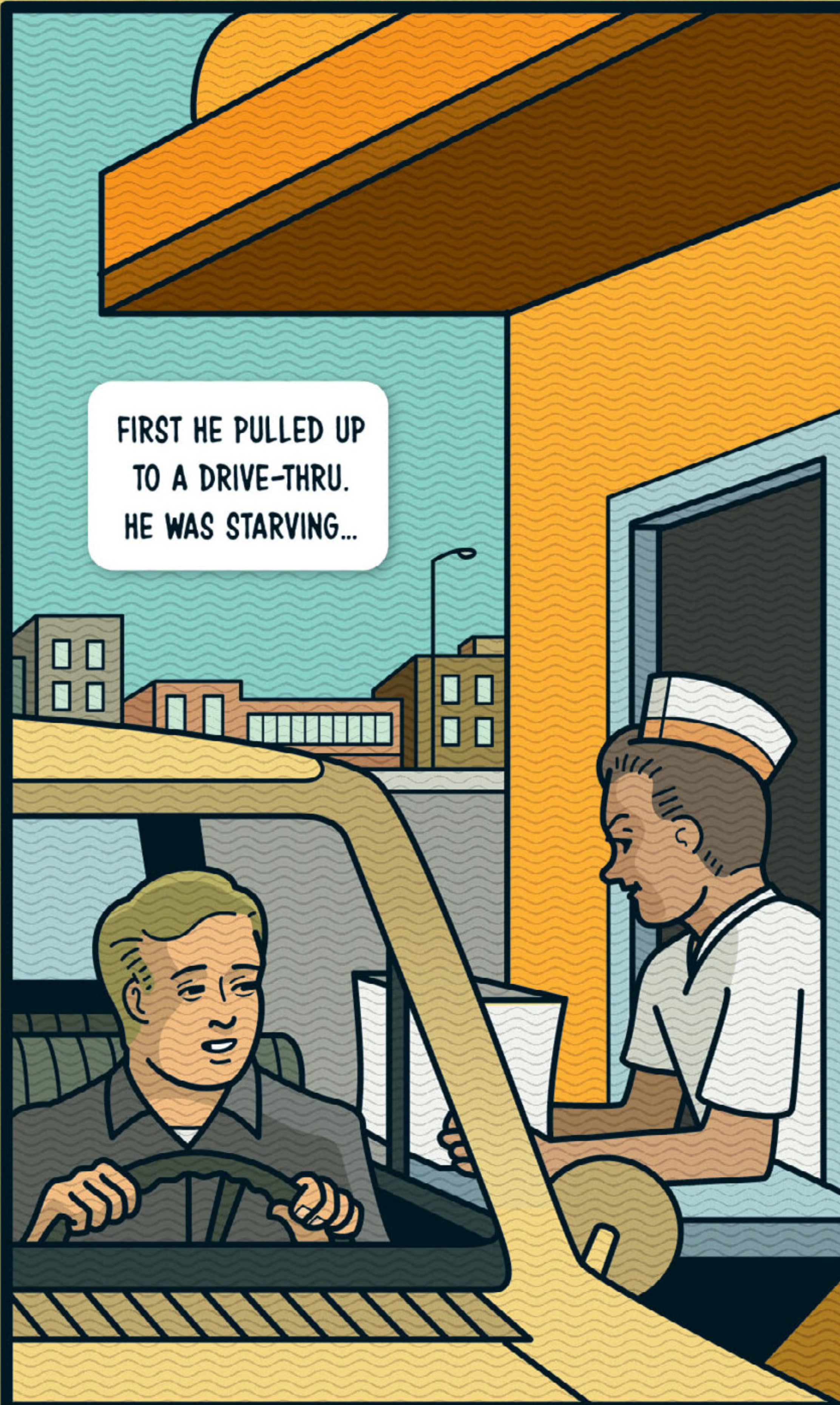
FROM TWO BLOCKS AWAY, HE SAW THE AMBULANCE.



THE ONLY WAY TO TRACK OLIVIA WAS THROUGH A MEDIUM. IF HE COULD FIND A RELIABLE ONE, THEY COULD TELL IF SHE WAS STILL ON THE LIVING SIDE. HE'D HAVE TO HURRY. SHE COULD ONLY CROSS OVER ONCE. IF THEY TOOK HER BACK, IT WOULD BE FOREVER.



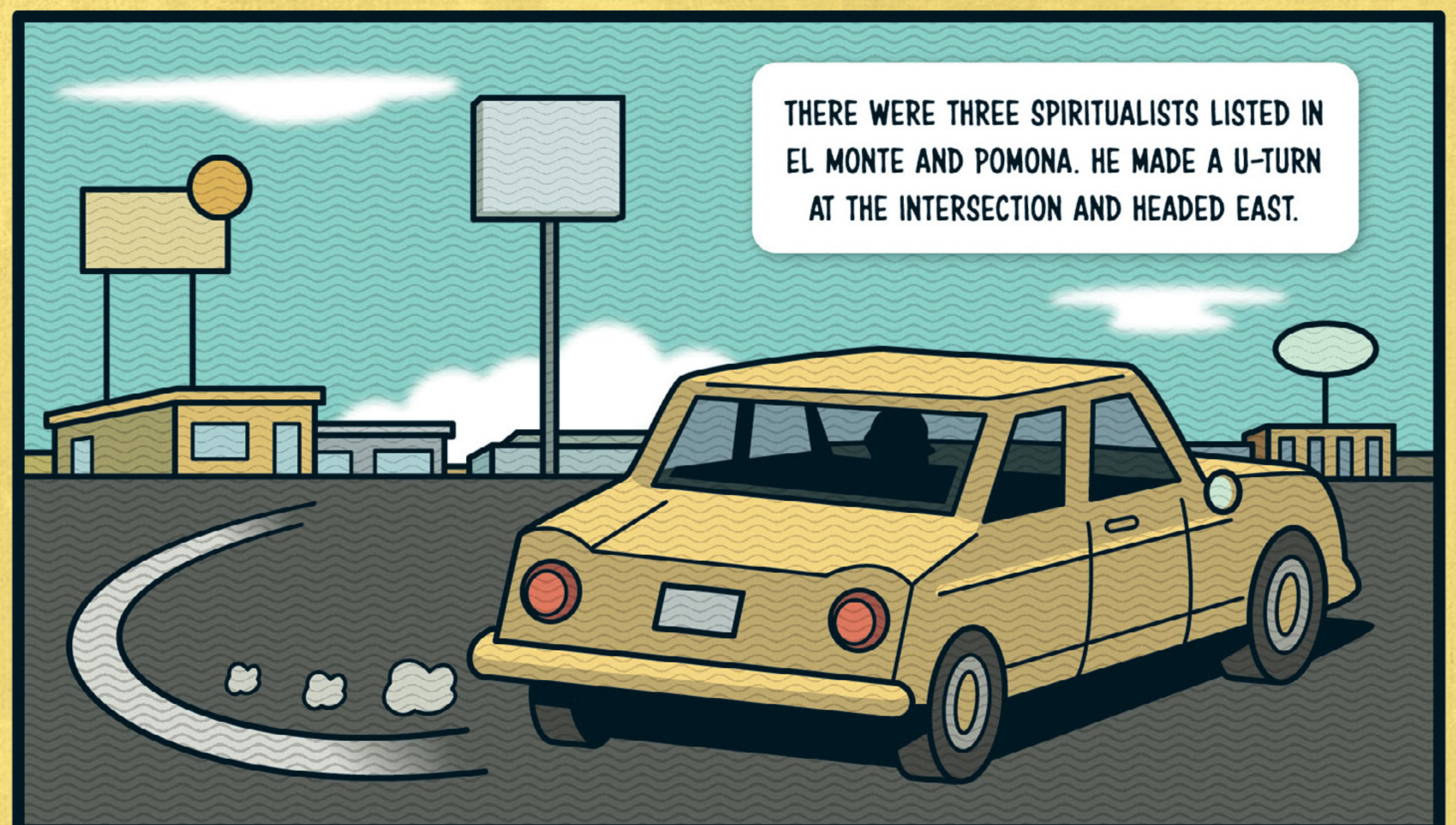
FIRST HE PULLED UP TO A DRIVE-THRU. HE WAS STARVING...



...FROM HIS CAR, HE SPOTTED WHAT HE NEEDED NEXT.

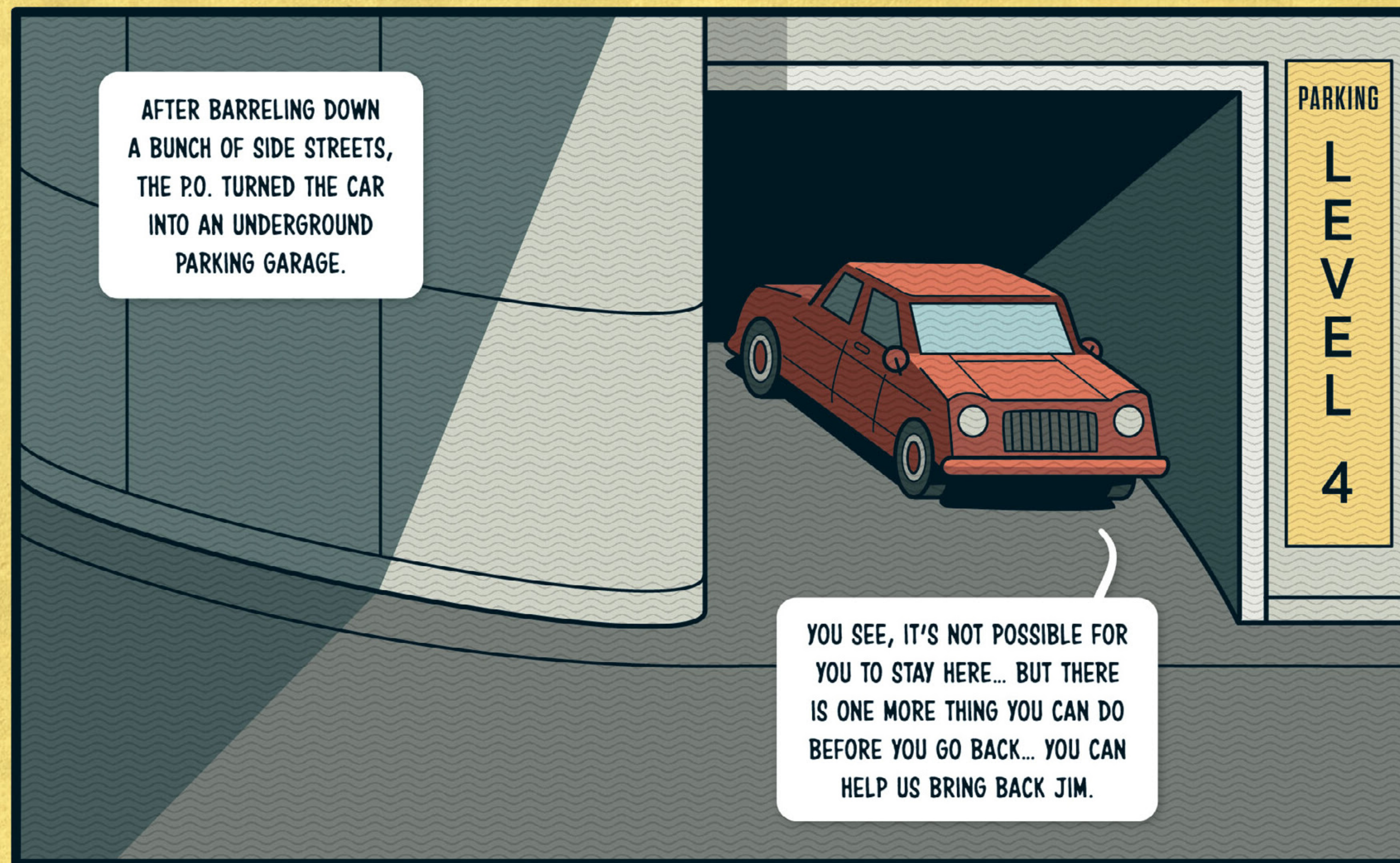


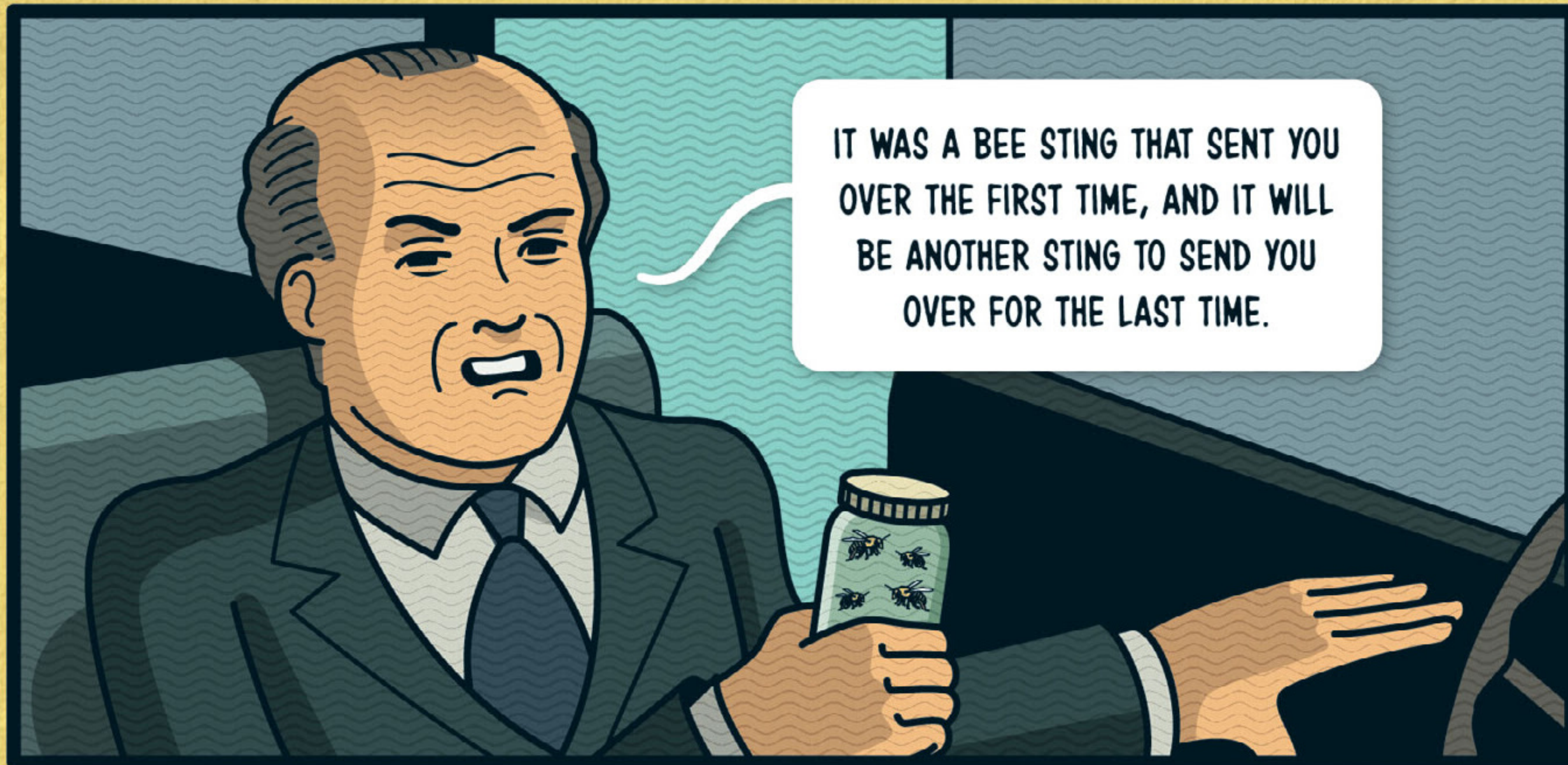
THERE WERE THREE SPIRITUALISTS LISTED IN EL MONTE AND POMONA. HE MADE A U-TURN AT THE INTERSECTION AND HEADED EAST.



PARK

CHAPTER 21

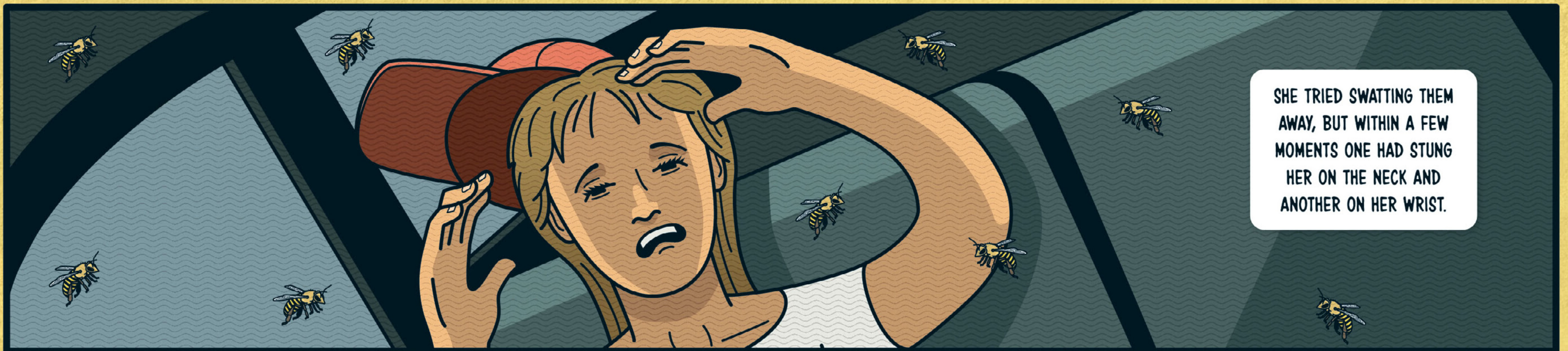




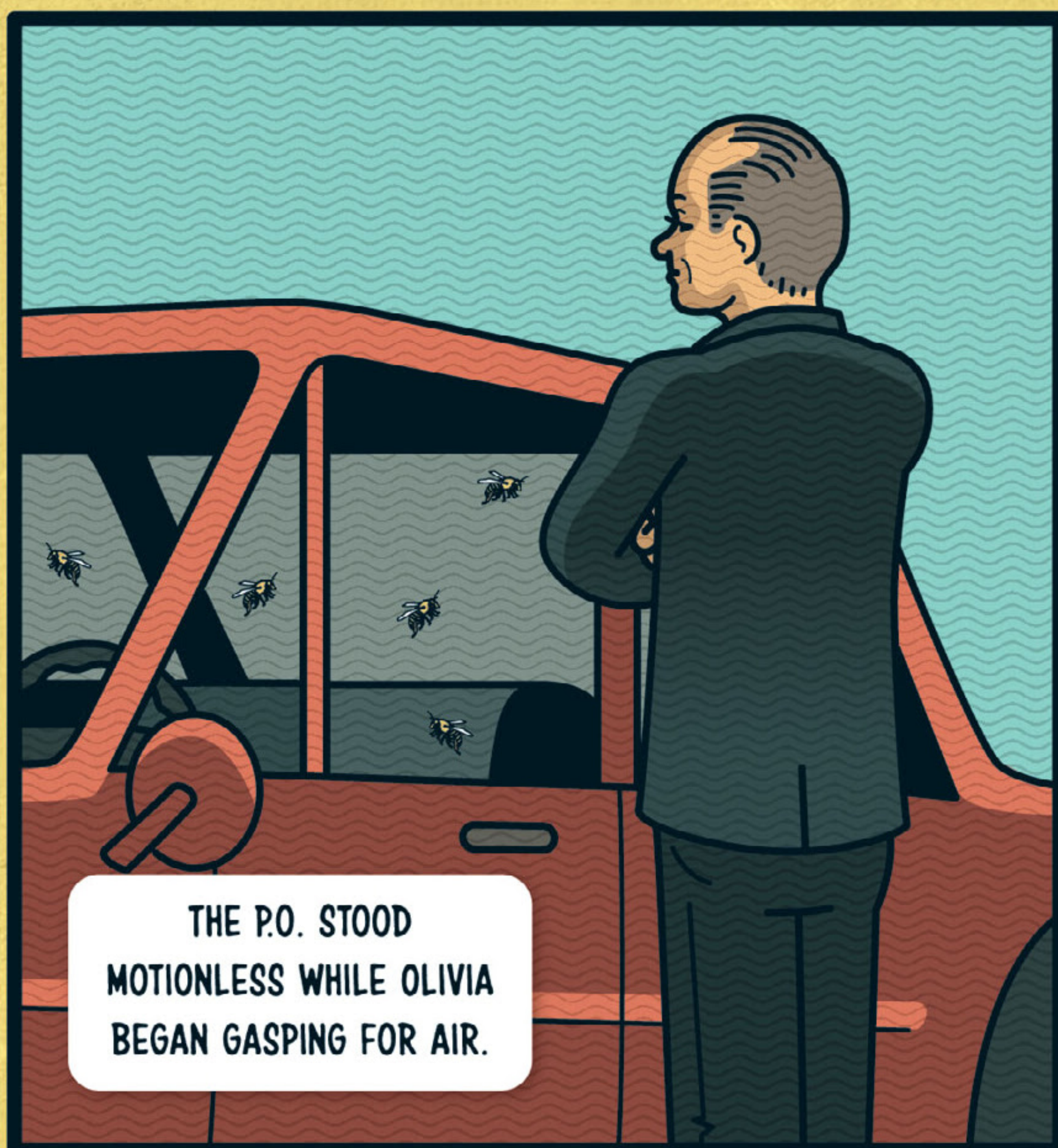
IT WAS A BEE STING THAT SENT YOU
OVER THE FIRST TIME, AND IT WILL
BE ANOTHER STING TO SEND YOU
OVER FOR THE LAST TIME.



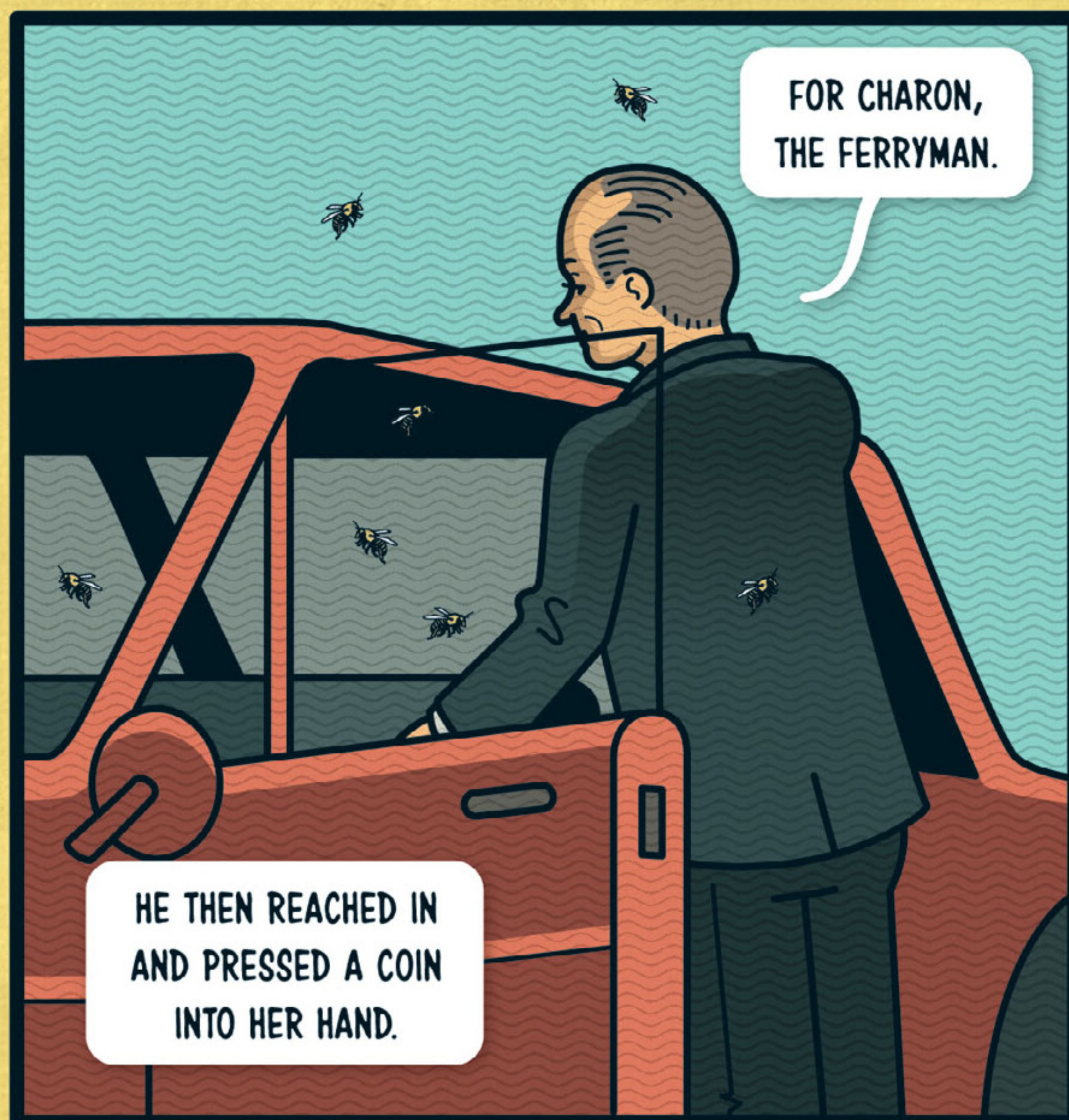
THE CAR'S DOOR LOCKS
CLICKED SHUT AS HE
UNSCREWED THE LID.



SHE TRIED SWATTING THEM
AWAY, BUT WITHIN A FEW
MOMENTS ONE HAD STUNG
HER ON THE NECK AND
ANOTHER ON HER WRIST.



THE P.O. STOOD
MOTIONLESS WHILE OLIVIA
BEGAN GASPING FOR AIR.

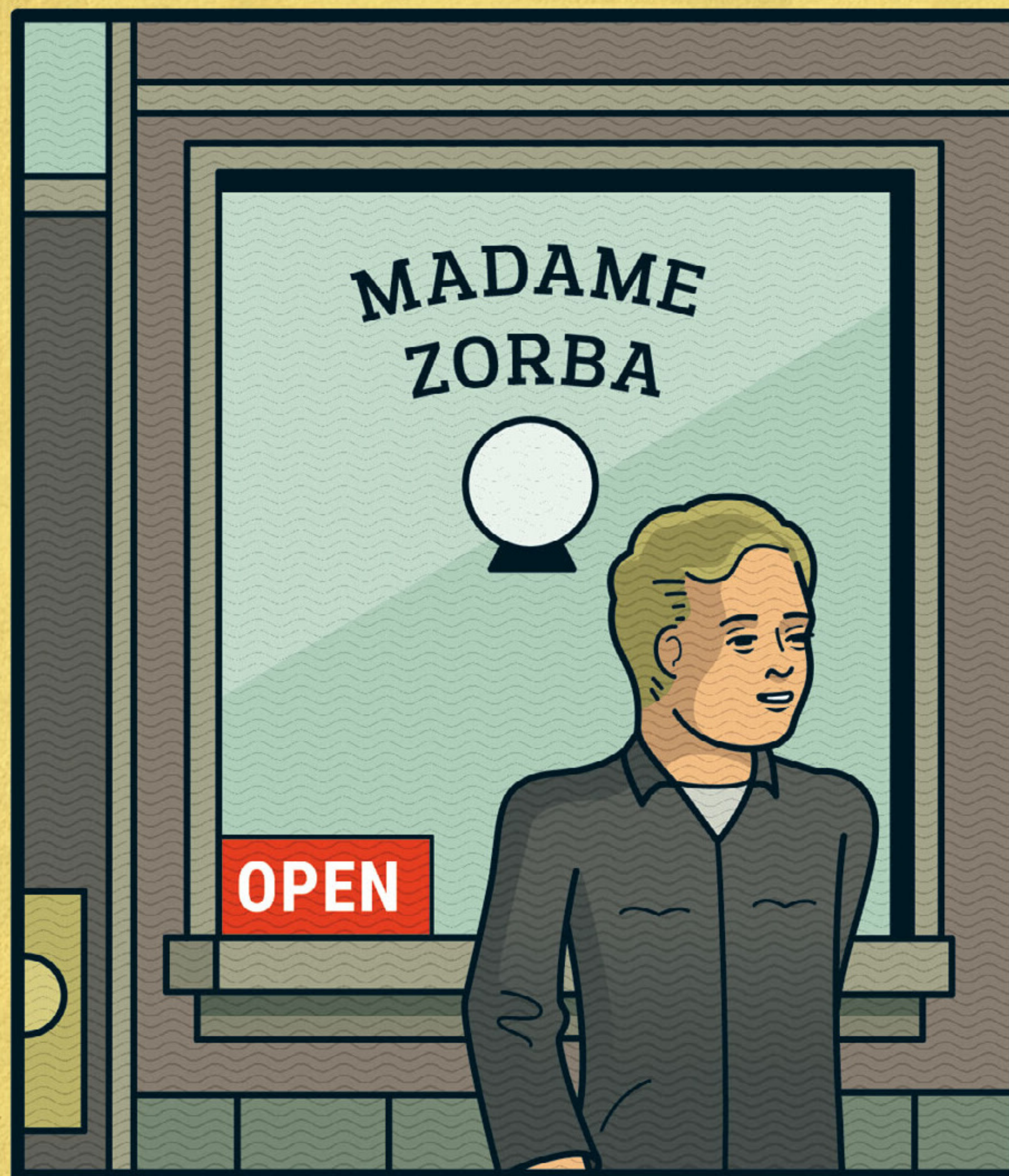
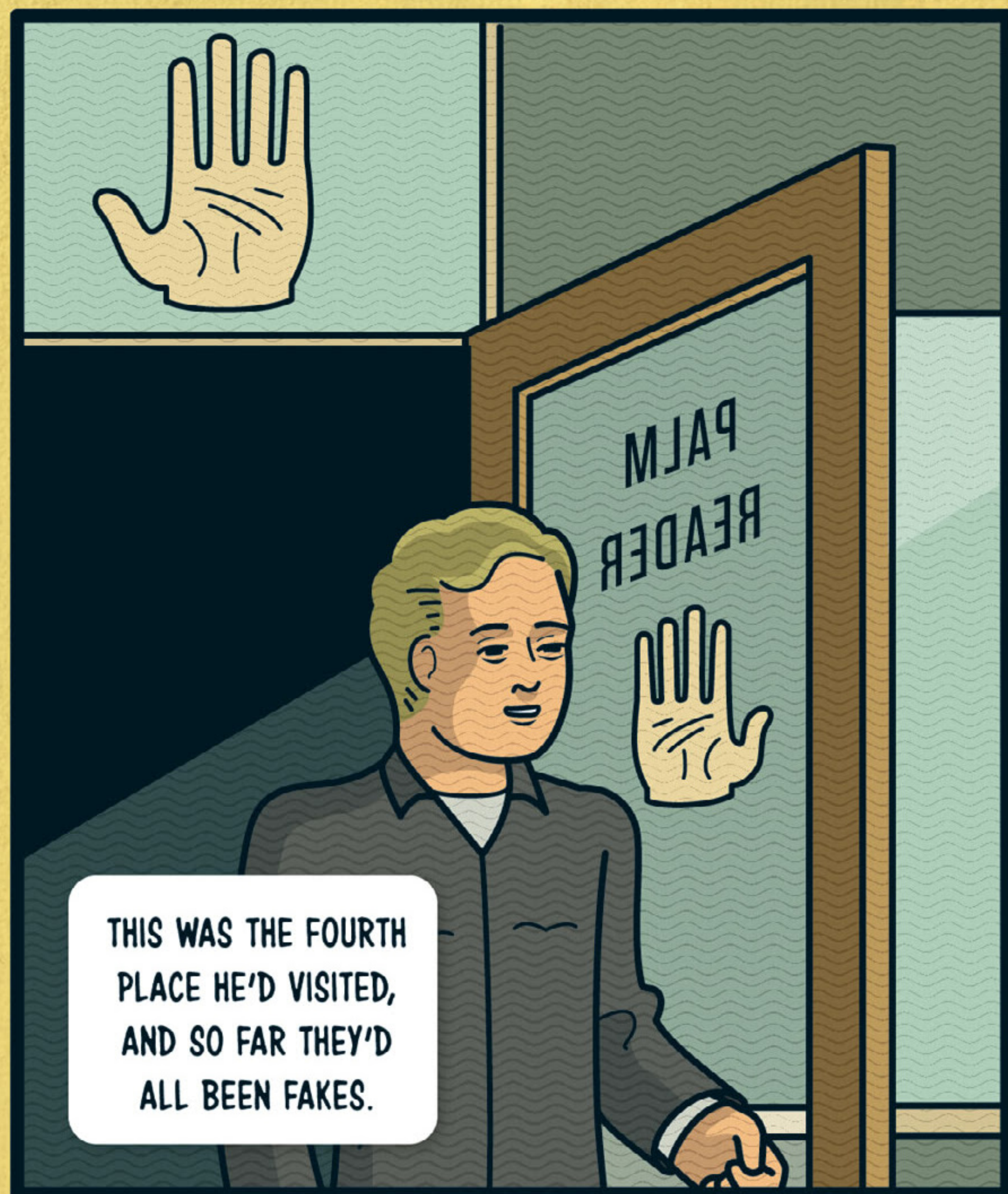


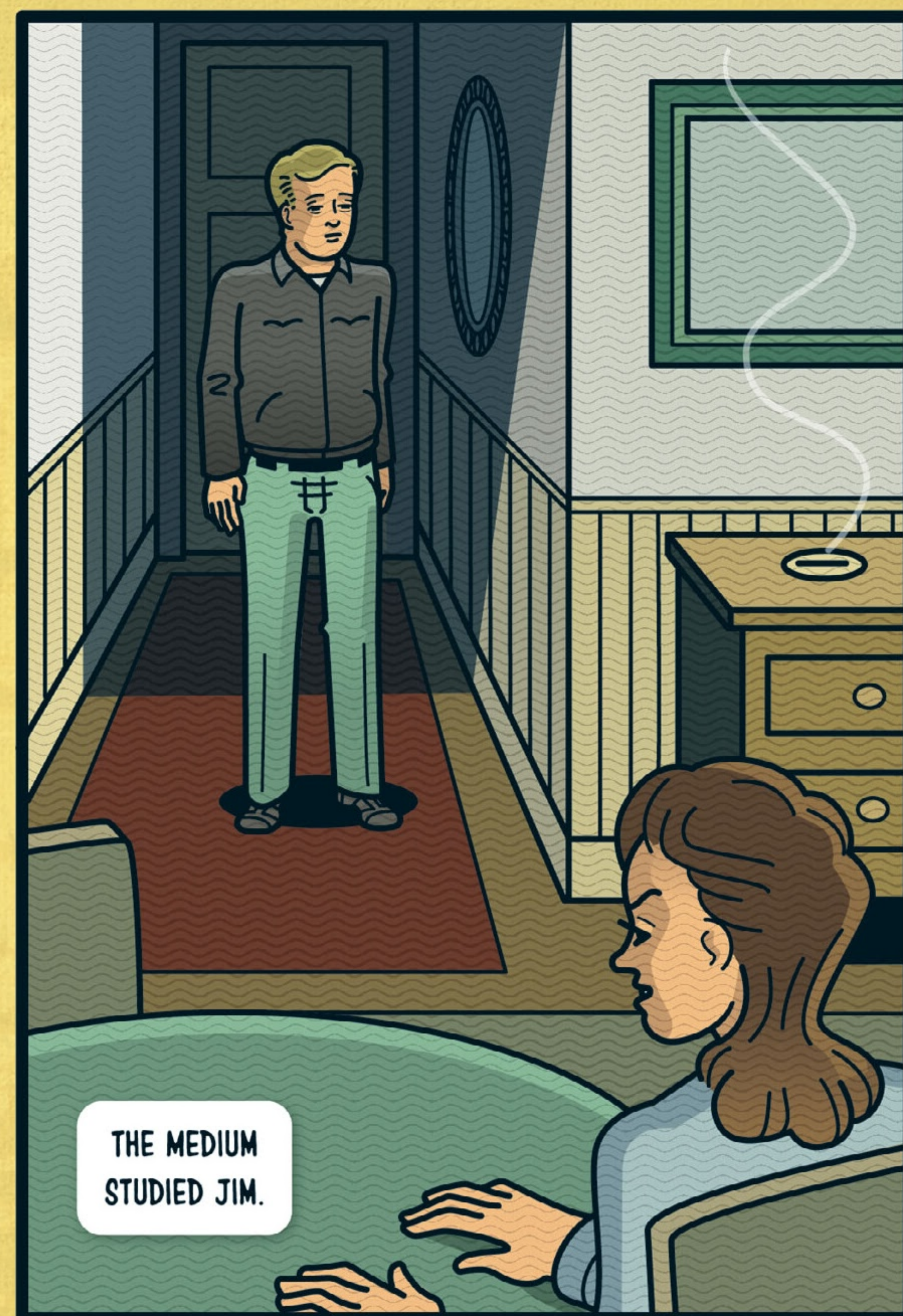
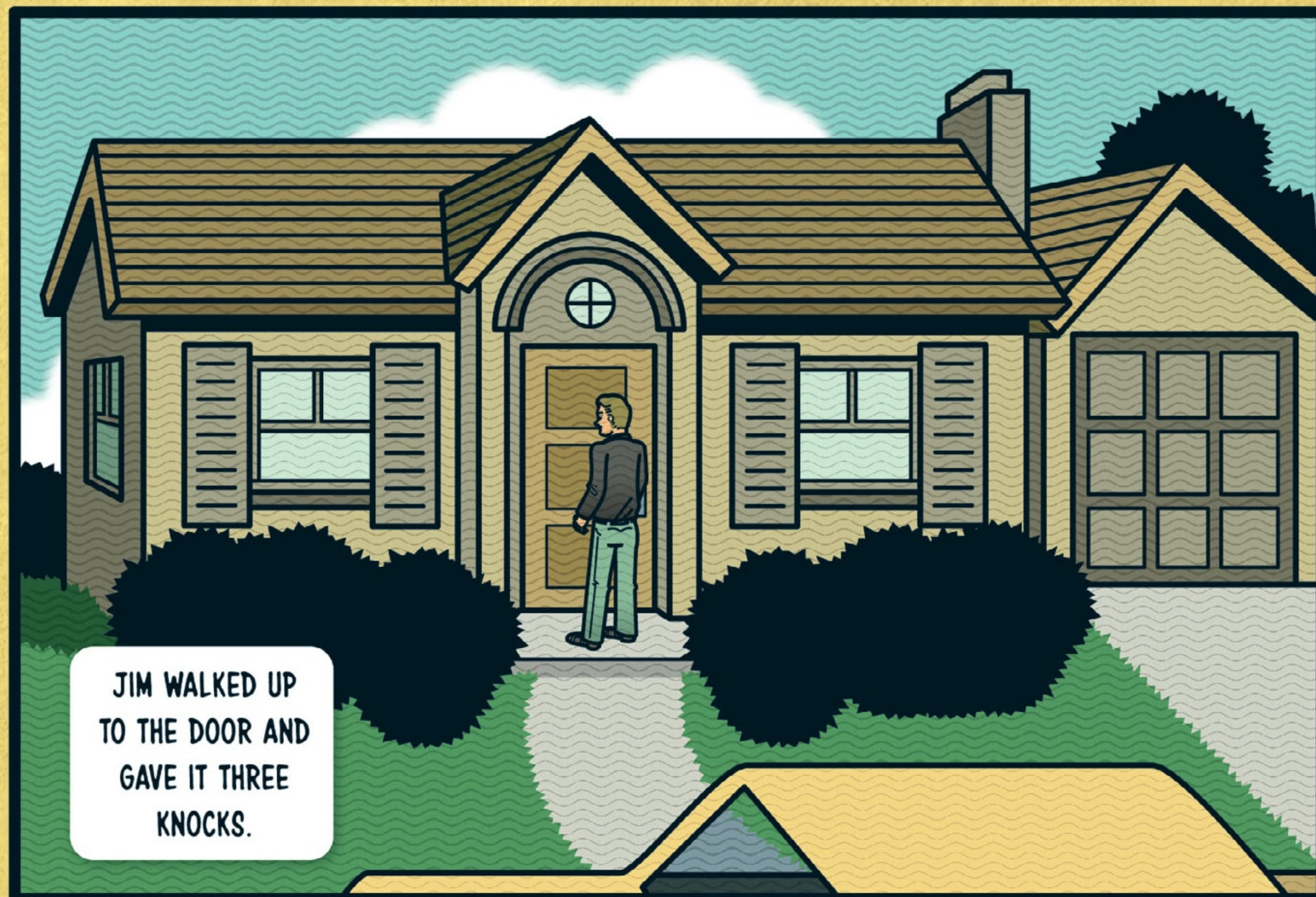
FOR CHARON,
THE FERRYMAN.

HE THEN REACHED IN
AND PRESSED A COIN
INTO HER HAND.



OLIVIA
DIED
AGAIN.







I'M LOOKING FOR...

YOU'RE ONE WHO CAN MOVE BETWEEN. AM I RIGHT?



SHE SAT THERE FOR SEVERAL LONG MOMENTS.

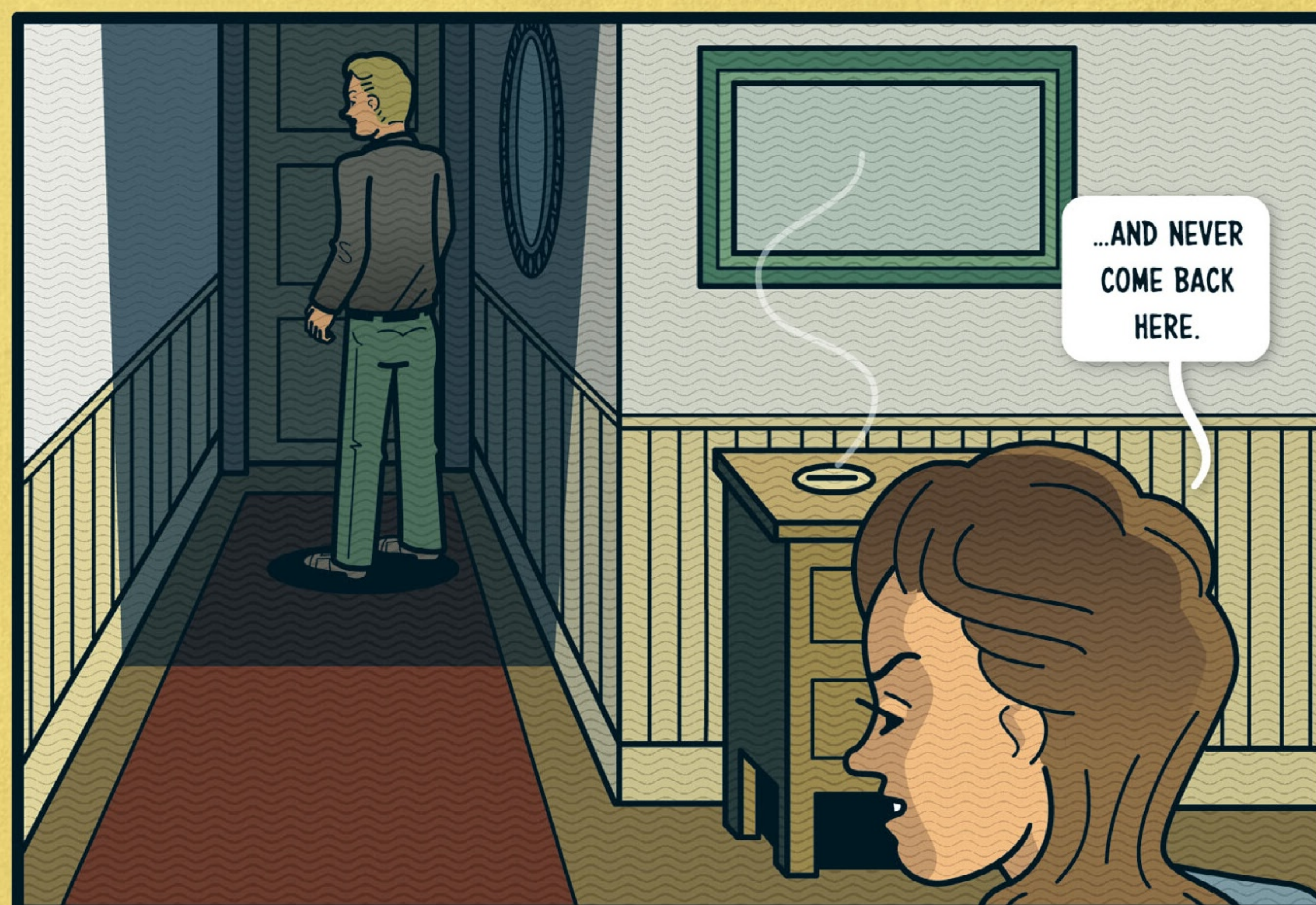


THE ROOM LIGHTS DIMMED. THE WOMAN BOWED HER HEAD AND BEGAN CHANTING IN A LOW VOICE. SHE REACHED OUT AND GRABBED HOLD OF JIM'S HANDS.

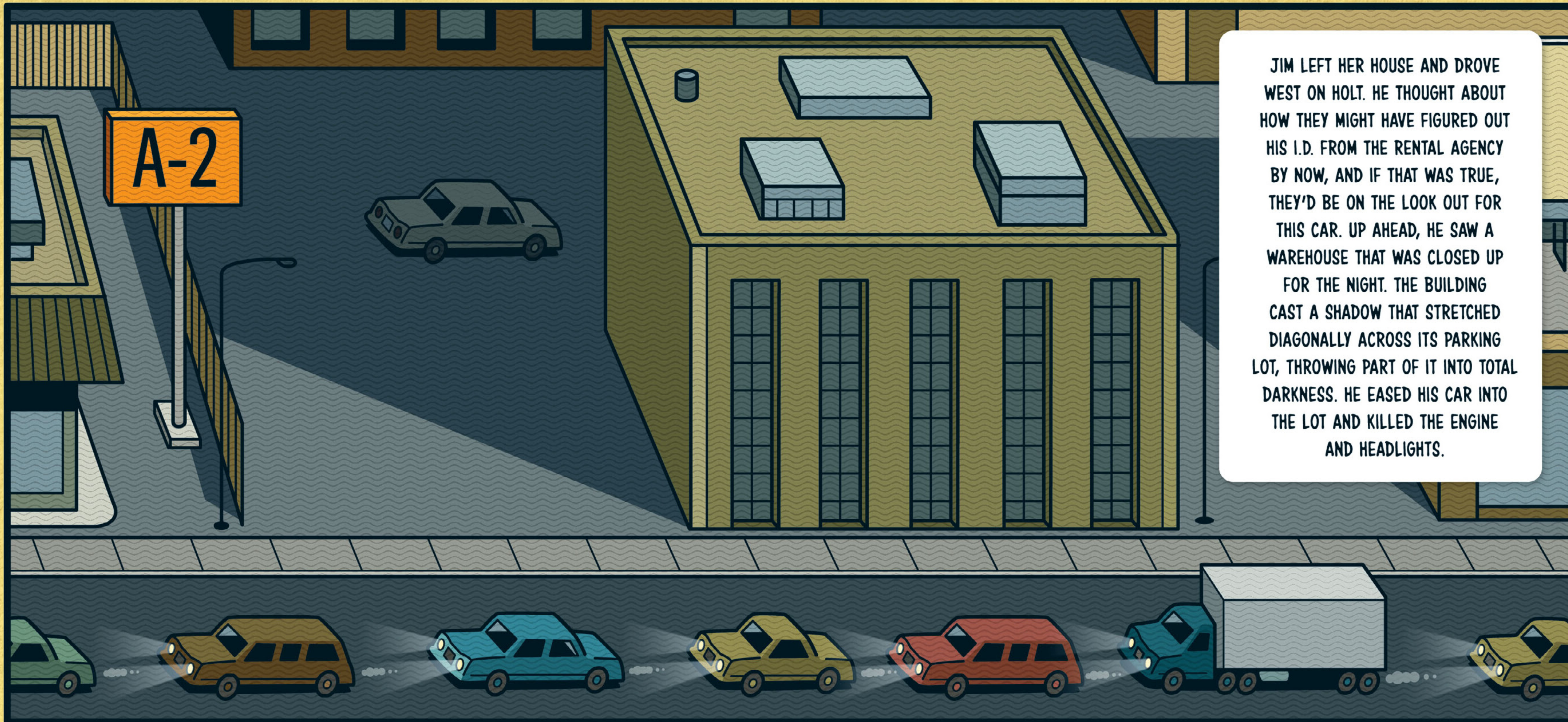


SHE LET GO OF HIS HANDS AND QUICKLY PULLED AWAY.

THE ONE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS GONE... AND YOU ARE IN DANGER. YOU MUST LEAVE...



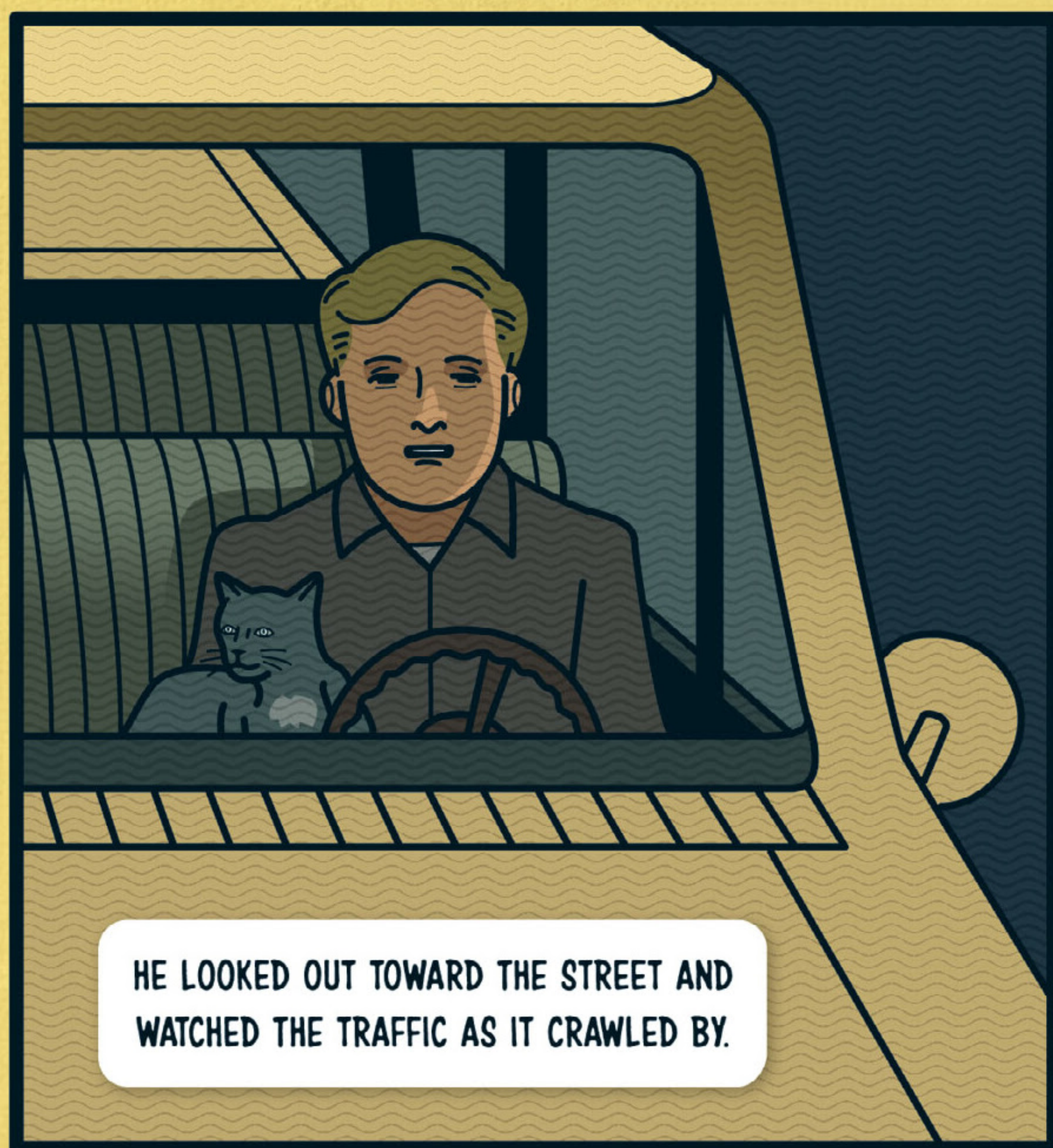
...AND NEVER COME BACK HERE.



JIM LEFT HER HOUSE AND DROVE WEST ON HOLT. HE THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THEY MIGHT HAVE FIGURED OUT HIS I.D. FROM THE RENTAL AGENCY BY NOW, AND IF THAT WAS TRUE, THEY'D BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR THIS CAR. UP AHEAD, HE SAW A WAREHOUSE THAT WAS CLOSED UP FOR THE NIGHT. THE BUILDING CAST A SHADOW THAT STRETCHED DIAGONALLY ACROSS ITS PARKING LOT, THROWING PART OF IT INTO TOTAL DARKNESS. HE EASED HIS CAR INTO THE LOT AND KILLED THE ENGINE AND HEADLIGHTS.



HE RUBBED BEHIND LUNA'S EARS, AND SHE PURRED IN HIS LAP.



HE LOOKED OUT TOWARD THE STREET AND WATCHED THE TRAFFIC AS IT CRAWLED BY.



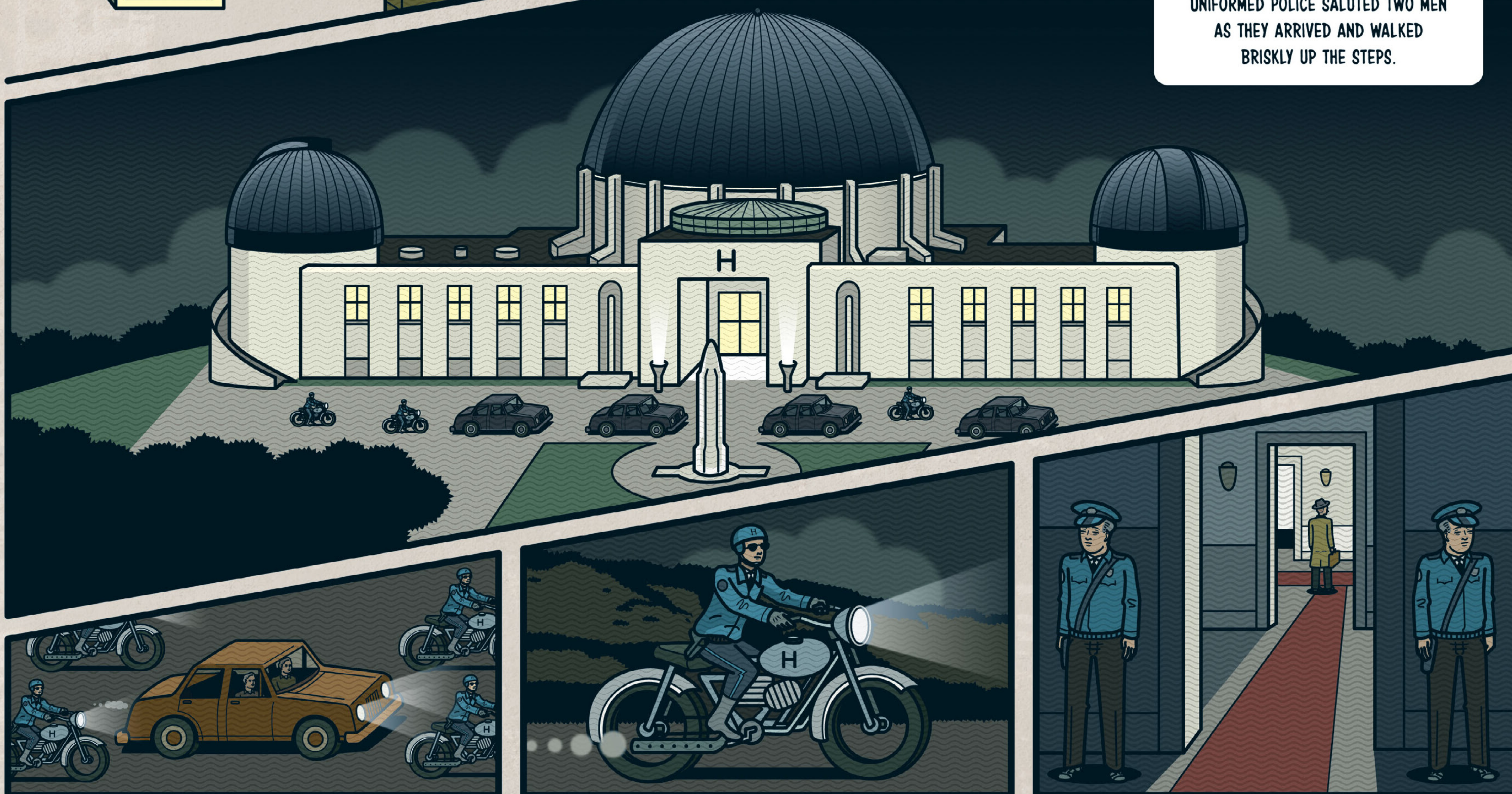
THAT WAS WHEN HE AND LUNA CROSSED OVER.

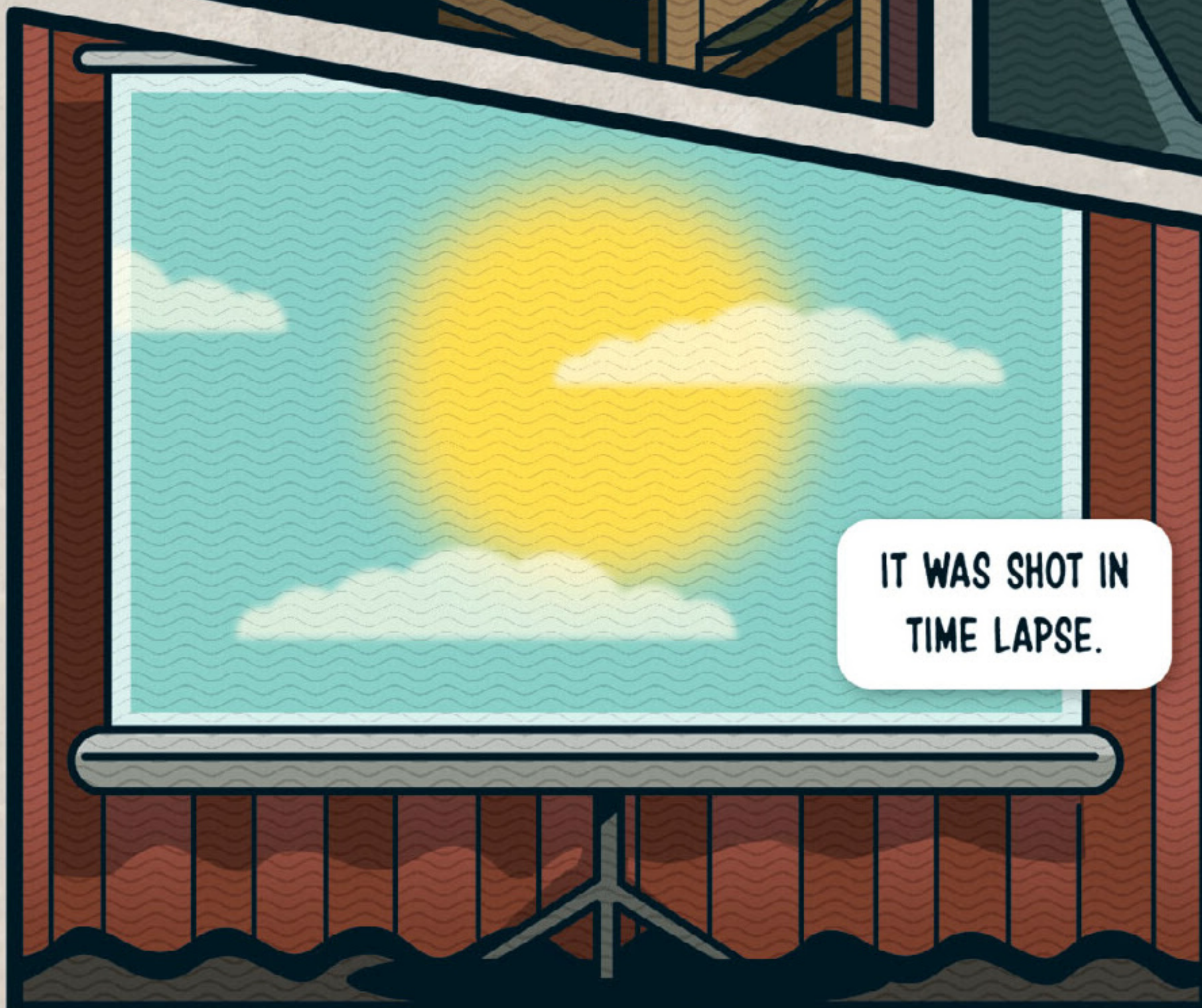
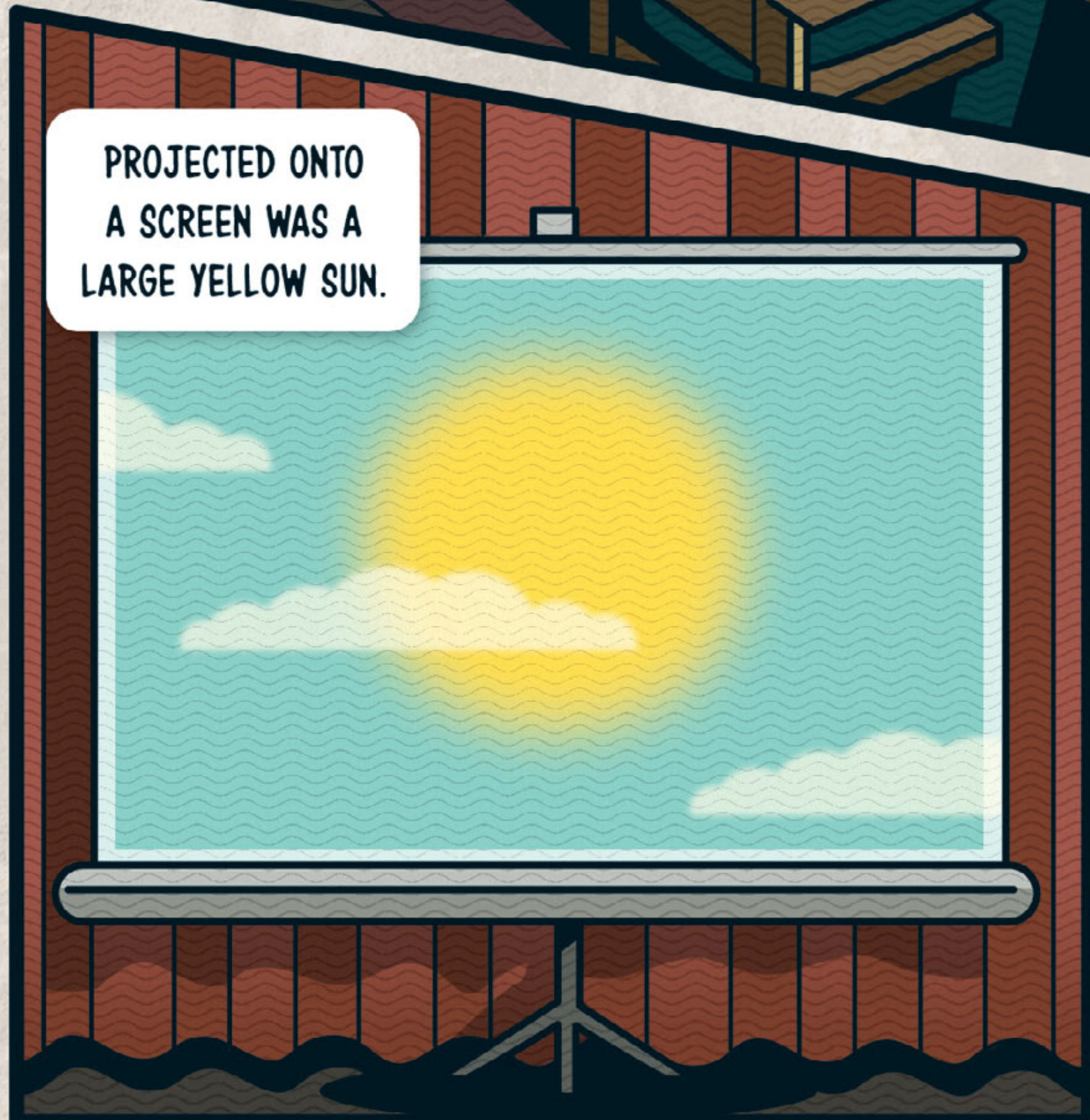
CHAPTER

22

DARK CLOUDS
ROLLED ACROSS
THE A.L.'S NIGHT SKY.

THERE WERE HALF A DOZEN BLACK SEDANS
PARKED ON THE GRAVEL DRIVEWAY.
UNIFORMED POLICE SALUTED TWO MEN
AS THEY ARRIVED AND WALKED
BRISKLY UP THE STEPS.







PERSEPHONE SAT ON A BACKLESS BENCH IN FRONT OF THE FIRE.



IT'S NOT THE SAME.



YOU CAN SHOW ALL THE MOVIES YOU WANT, BUT IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME. YOU CAN'T FEEL IT, NO MATTER HOW BIG A FIRE YOU MAKE.



IT'S NOT THE SAME KIND OF WARMTH.

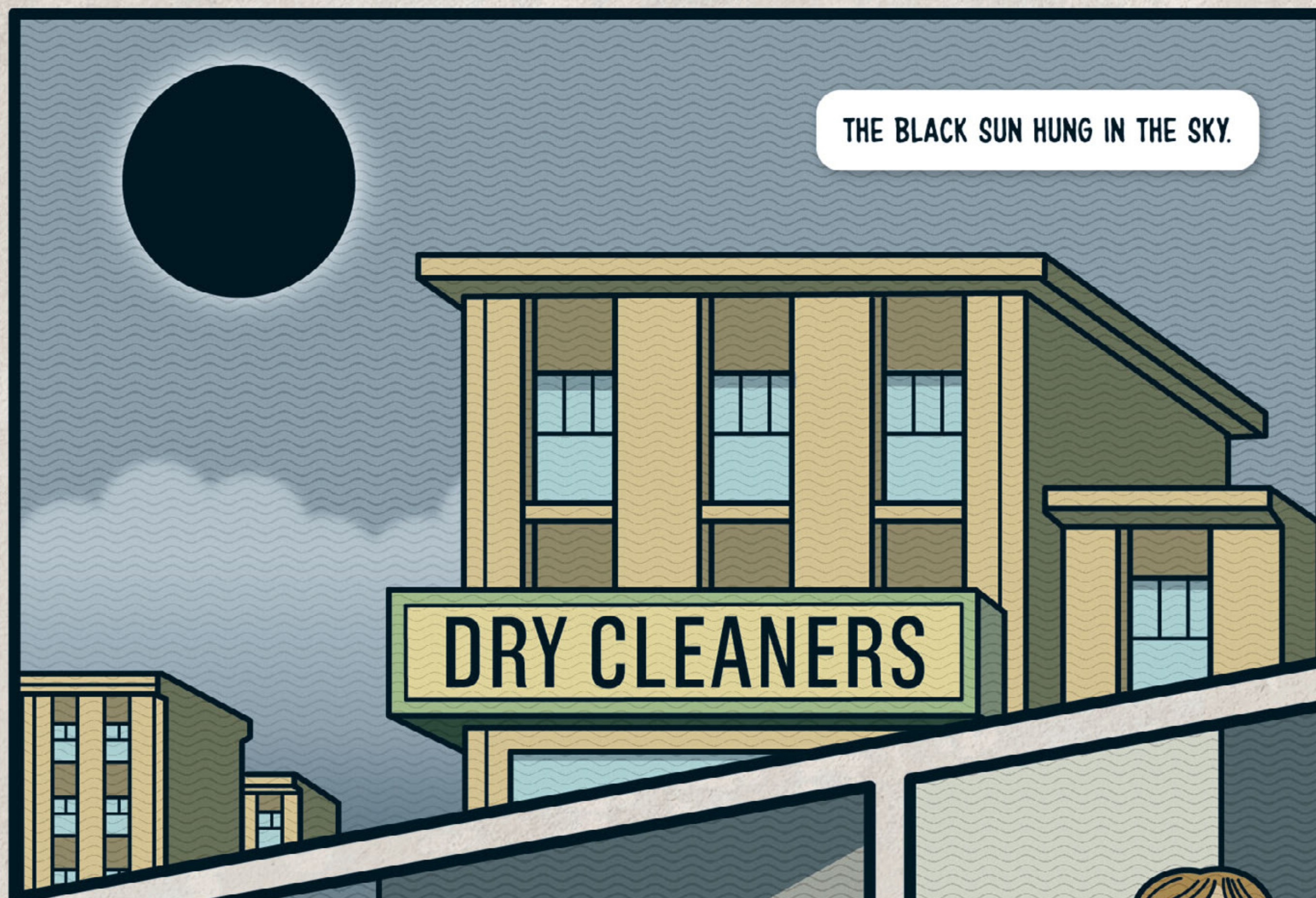


THE TWO MEN STRODE THROUGH THE DOORWAY. THEY STOPPED IN FRONT OF HADES AND SALUTED HIM. THE TALLER MAN HELD OUT HIS HAND AND PLACED A COIN ON THE TABLE.

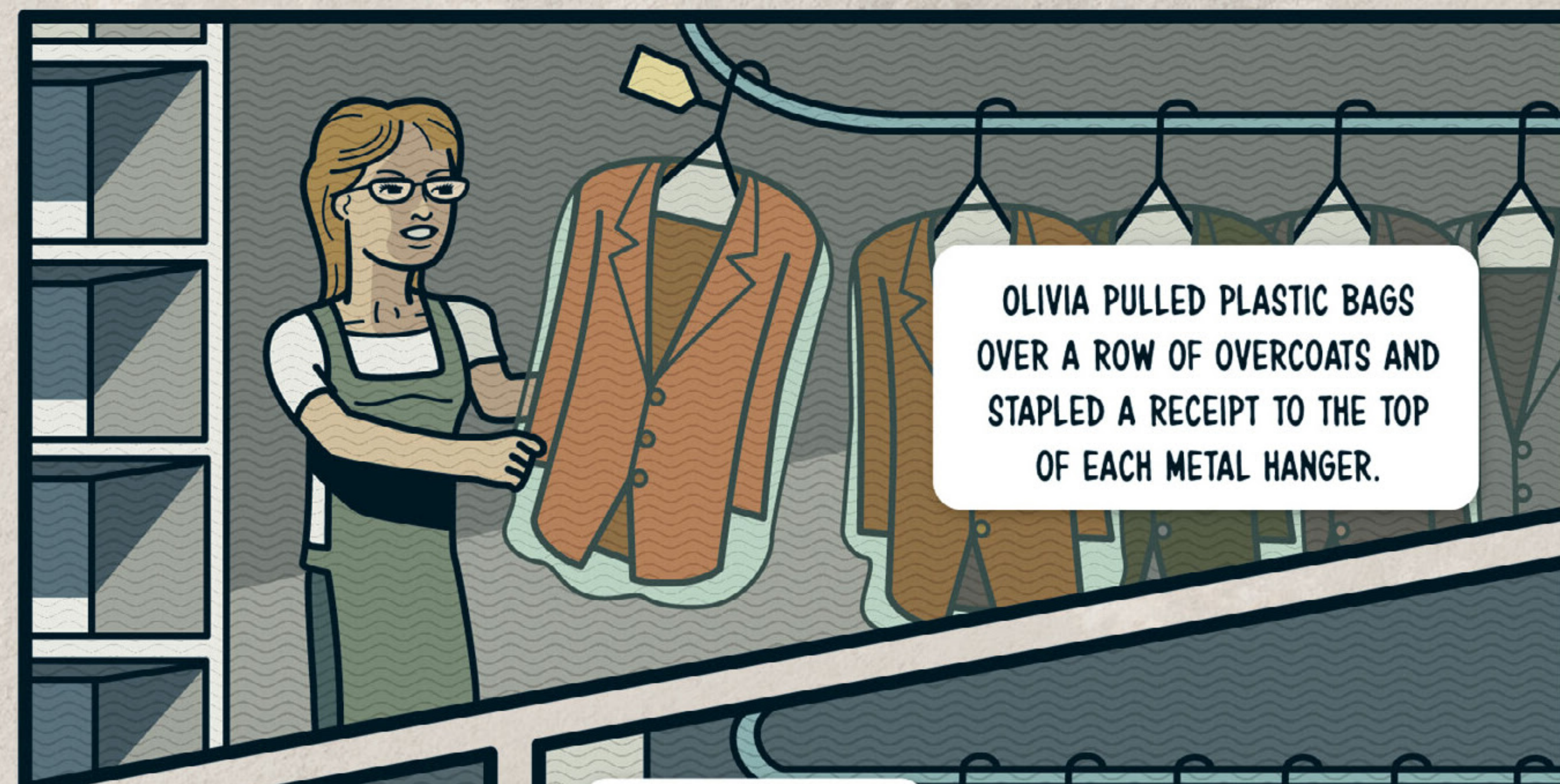
OLIVIA HAS CROSSED.



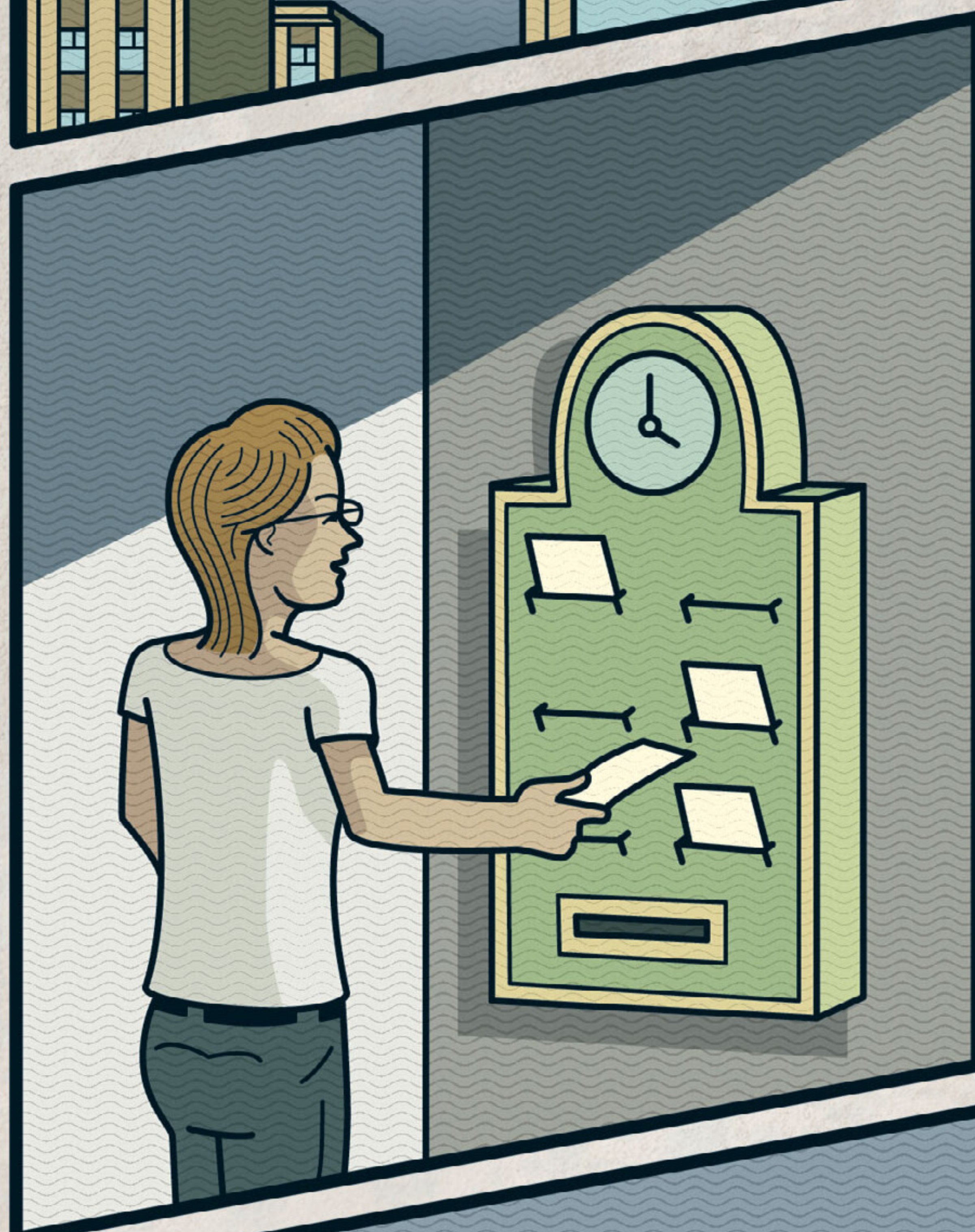
VERY WELL... VERY WELL. GIVE HER BACK HER OLD JOB AND APARTMENT. WE WILL KEEP IT ALL LIKE IT WAS...FOR NOW.



THE BLACK SUN HUNG IN THE SKY.



OLIVIA PULLED PLASTIC BAGS OVER A ROW OF OVERCOATS AND STAPLED A RECEIPT TO THE TOP OF EACH METAL HANGER.



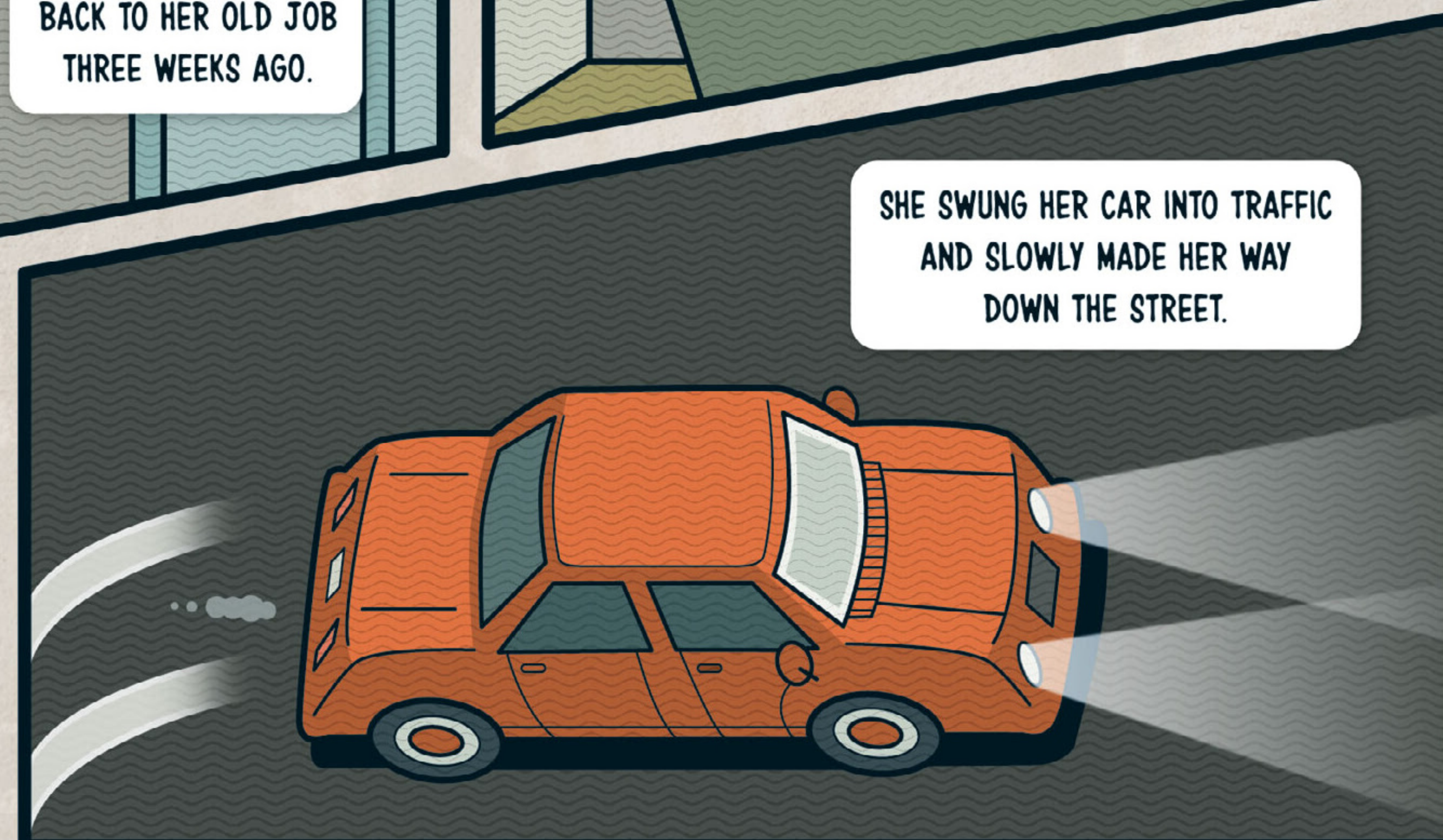
SHE HAD REPORTED BACK TO HER OLD JOB THREE WEEKS AGO.



NO ONE ASKED WHERE SHE'D BEEN OR HOW LONG SHE'D BEEN BACK. THEY KNEW BETTER THAN TO PRY INTO ANOTHER SHADE'S BUSINESS.



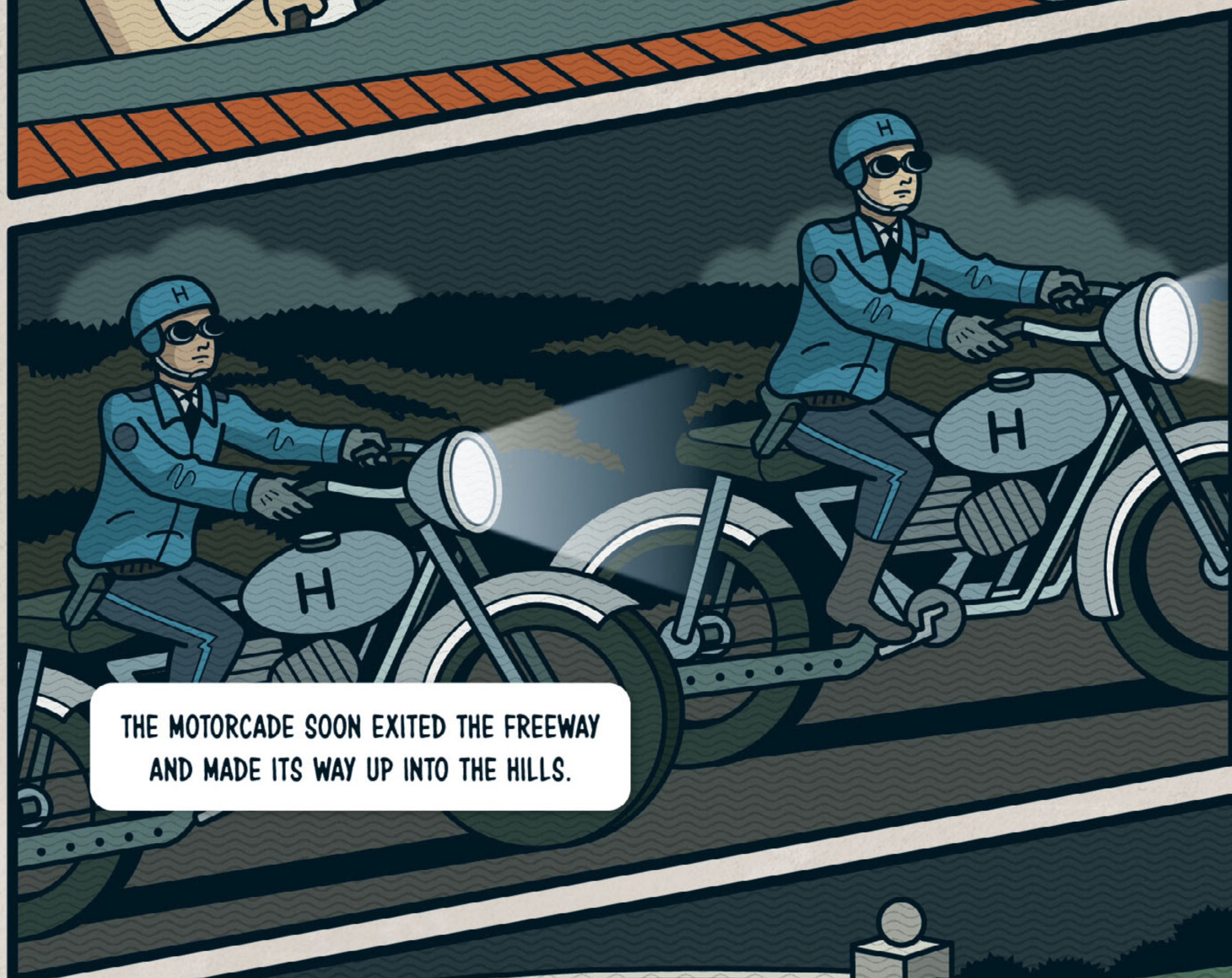
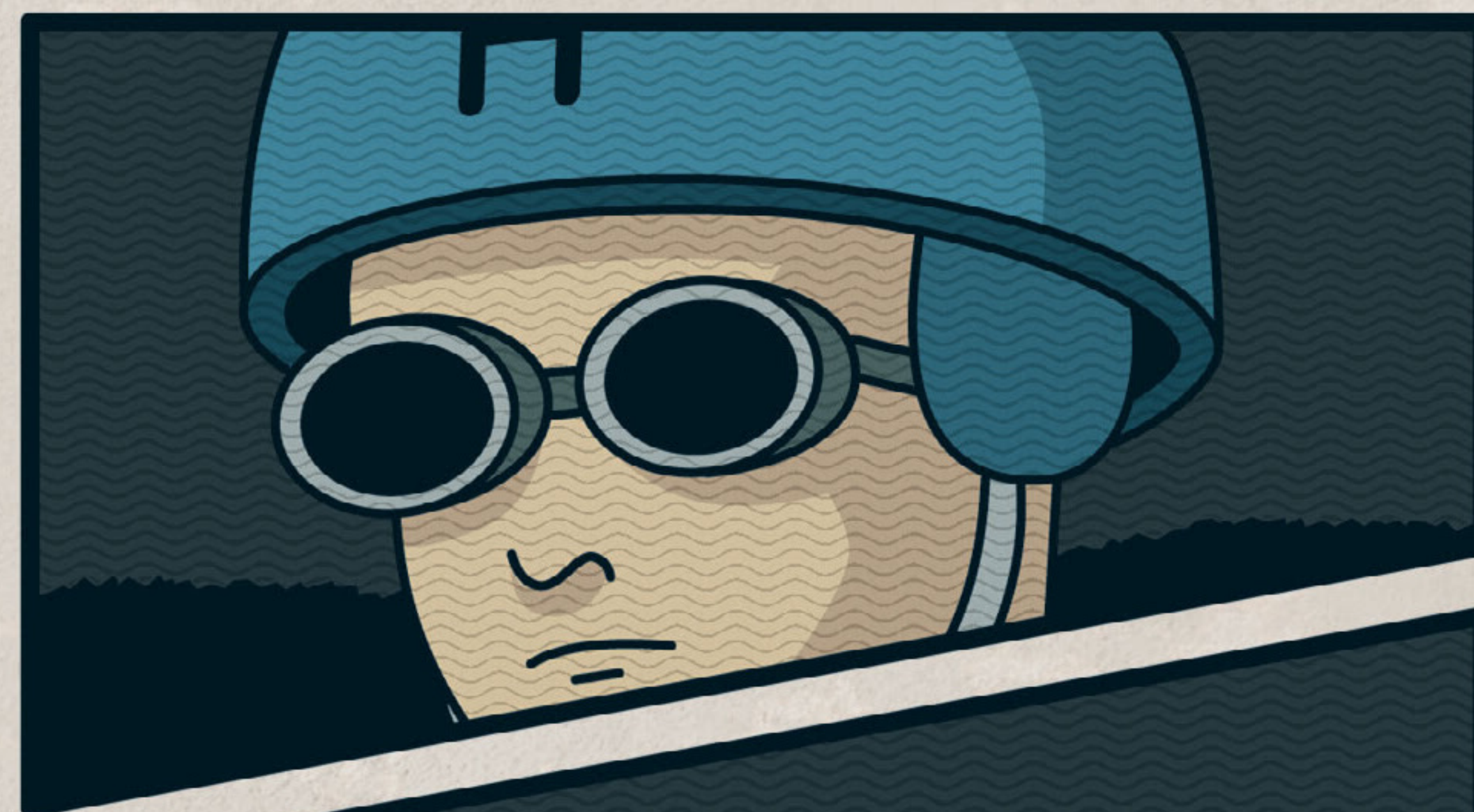
AT THE END OF THE DAY, SHE LEFT OUT THE SIDE DOOR.



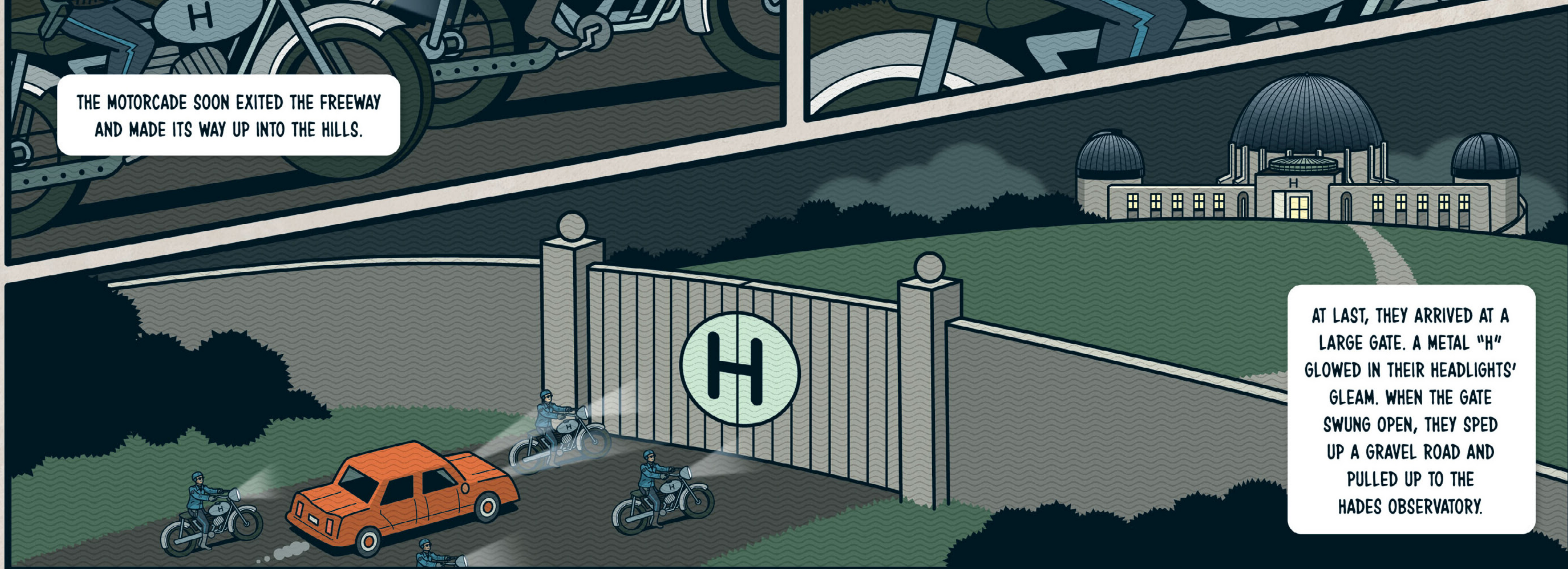
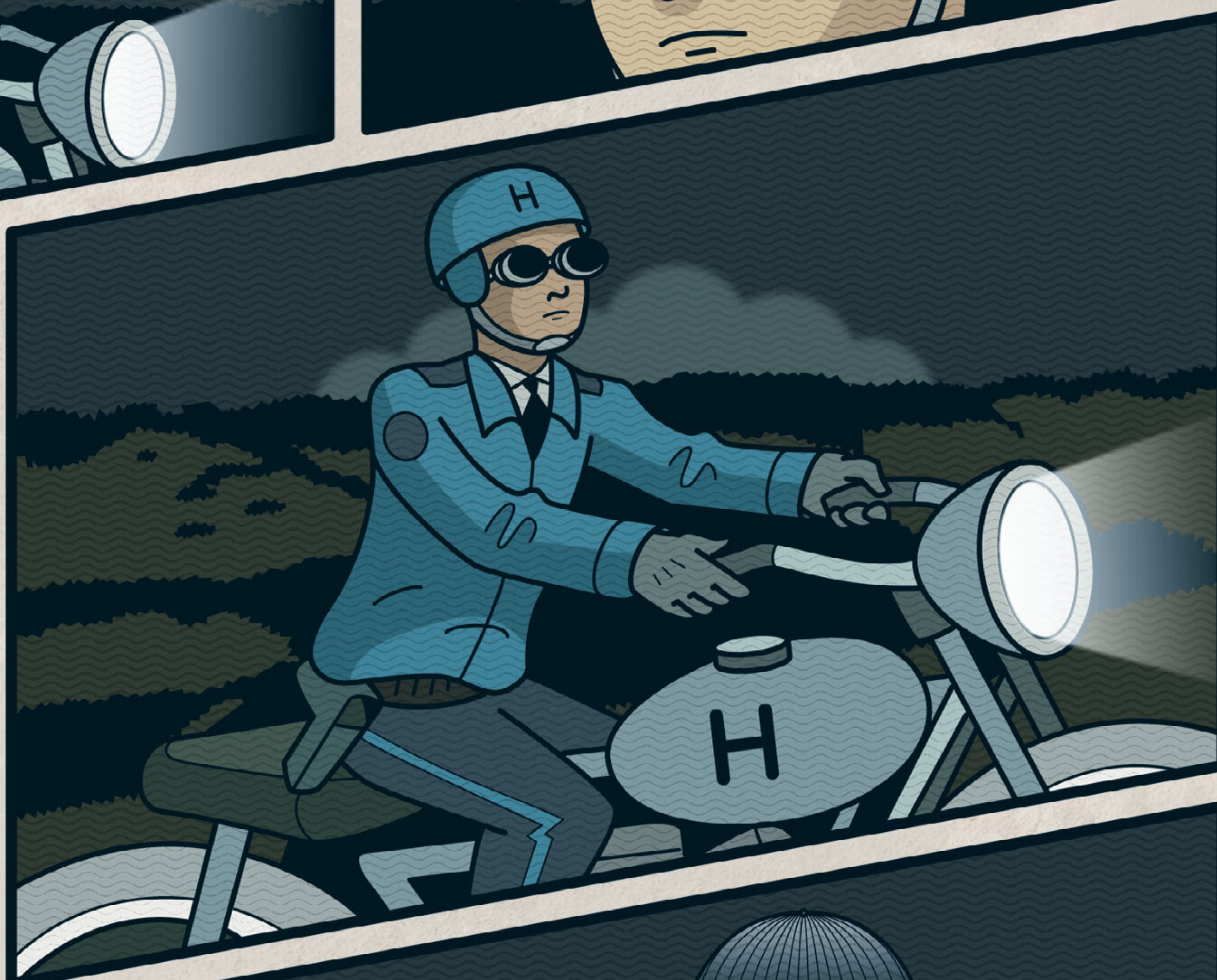
SHE SWUNG HER CAR INTO TRAFFIC AND SLOWLY MADE HER WAY DOWN THE STREET.



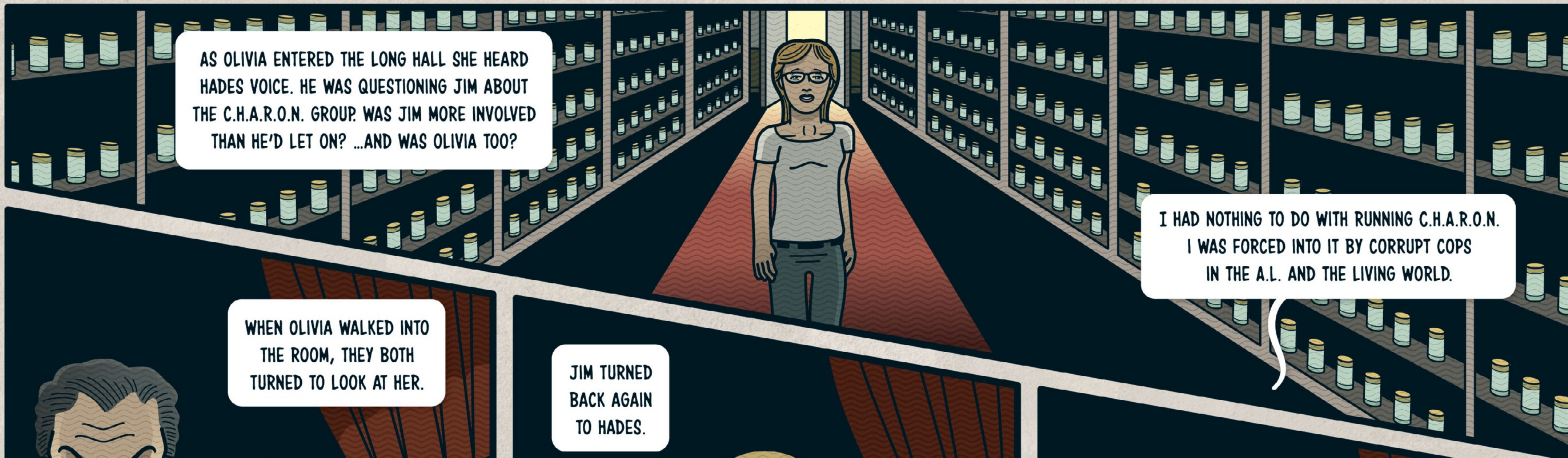
MOTORCYCLE COPS PULLED UP ON EITHER SIDE OF HER CAR AND MOTIONED FOR HER TO FOLLOW THEM.



THE MOTORCADE SOON EXITED THE FREEWAY AND MADE ITS WAY UP INTO THE HILLS.



AT LAST, THEY ARRIVED AT A LARGE GATE. A METAL "H" GLOWED IN THEIR HEADLIGHTS' GLEAM. WHEN THE GATE SWUNG OPEN, THEY SPED UP A GRAVEL ROAD AND PULLED UP TO THE HADES OBSERVATORY.



AS OLIVIA ENTERED THE LONG HALL SHE HEARD HADES VOICE. HE WAS QUESTIONING JIM ABOUT THE C.H.A.R.O.N. GROUP. WAS JIM MORE INVOLVED THAN HE'D LET ON? ...AND WAS OLIVIA TOO?

I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RUNNING C.H.A.R.O.N. I WAS FORCED INTO IT BY CORRUPT COPS IN THE A.I. AND THE LIVING WORLD.



WHEN OLIVIA WALKED INTO THE ROOM, THEY BOTH TURNED TO LOOK AT HER.



JIM TURNED BACK AGAIN TO HADES.



AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU SHOULD LET OLIVIA GO BACK. HER INVOLVEMENT IN THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT, AND SOMETHING FOR WHICH I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.



IF THERE'S ANYONE WHO IS INNOCENT, IT'S HER.



TELL ME, JIM, DON'T YOU KNOW WHY YOU HAVE THIS CONNECTOR ABILITY? HAVE YOU NOT GUESSED WHO YOUR REAL FATHER IS?

HE IS A MINOR DEITY...CAERUS. THE GOD OF LUCK AND FAVORABLE OUTCOMES. YOU WERE THE RESULT OF A BRIEF DALLIANCE WITH A MORTAL WOMAN...BETWEEN POKER HANDS, NO DOUBT. YOUR MOTHER GAVE YOU UP TO AN ORPHANAGE. YOUR ADOPTIVE PARENTS NEVER KNEW YOUR BACKGROUND.

WHERE IS MY FATHER NOW?

IN LAS VEGAS...MOST LIKELY. HE'S NOT ABOVE USING HIS DEITY STATUS TO COUNT CARDS. YOU CAN LOOK HIM UP IF YOU LIKE, BUT I DOUBT YOU'LL LIKE WHAT YOU FIND... LOW-CLASS MOUNT OLYMPUS IS CAERUS.

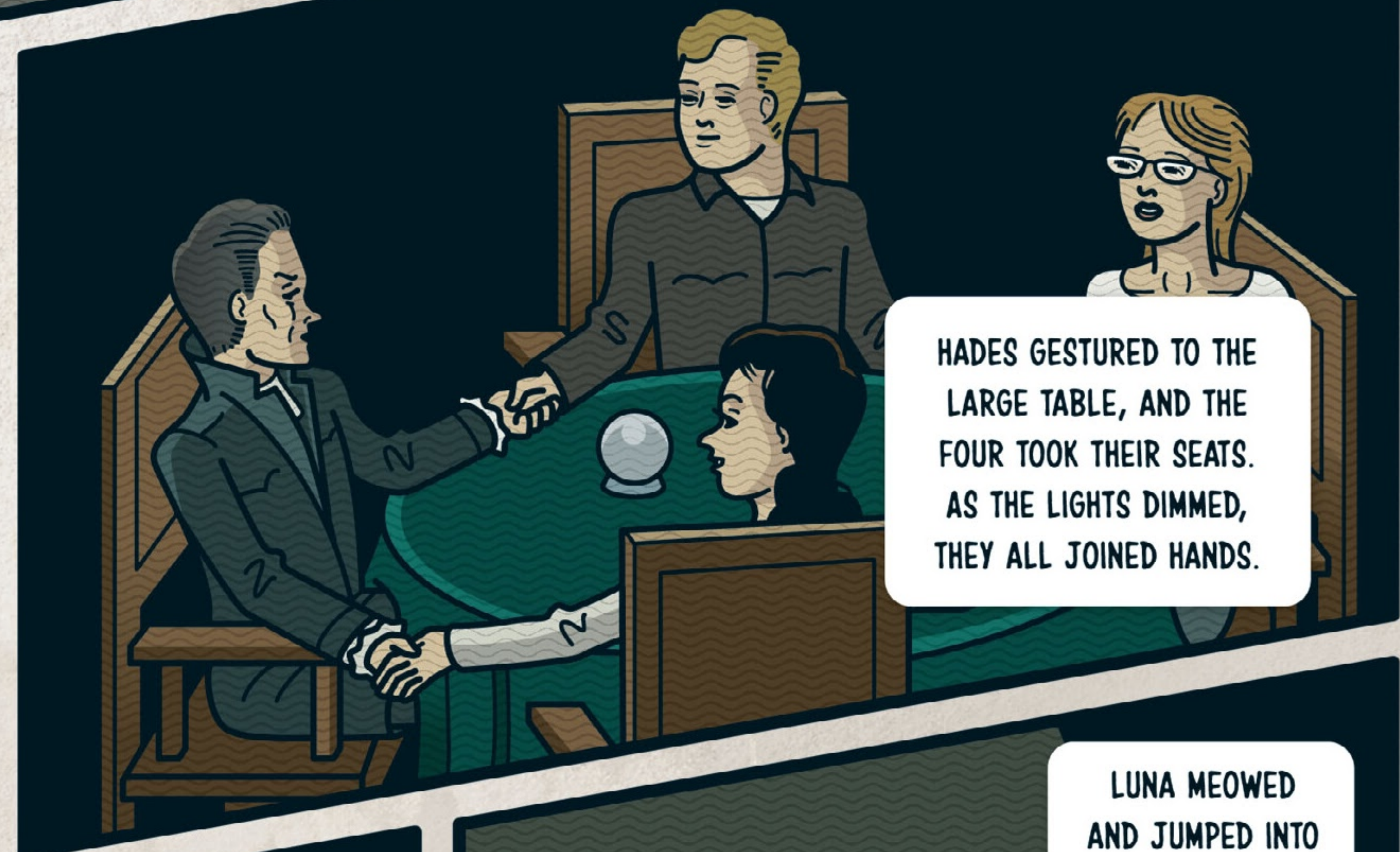
SO, JIM IS A DEMIGOD. SINCE UP TO THIS POINT HIS TRUE PATERNITY HAS BEEN A MYSTERY TO HIM, YOU CAN'T BLAME HIM FOR UNKNOWNLY UPSETTING THE BALANCE.



RELUCTANTLY, HADES AGREED WITH HIS WIFE. HOWEVER, HE WOULD ONLY LET THE TWO OF THEM GO IF JIM COMPLETED A TASK FOR HIM...



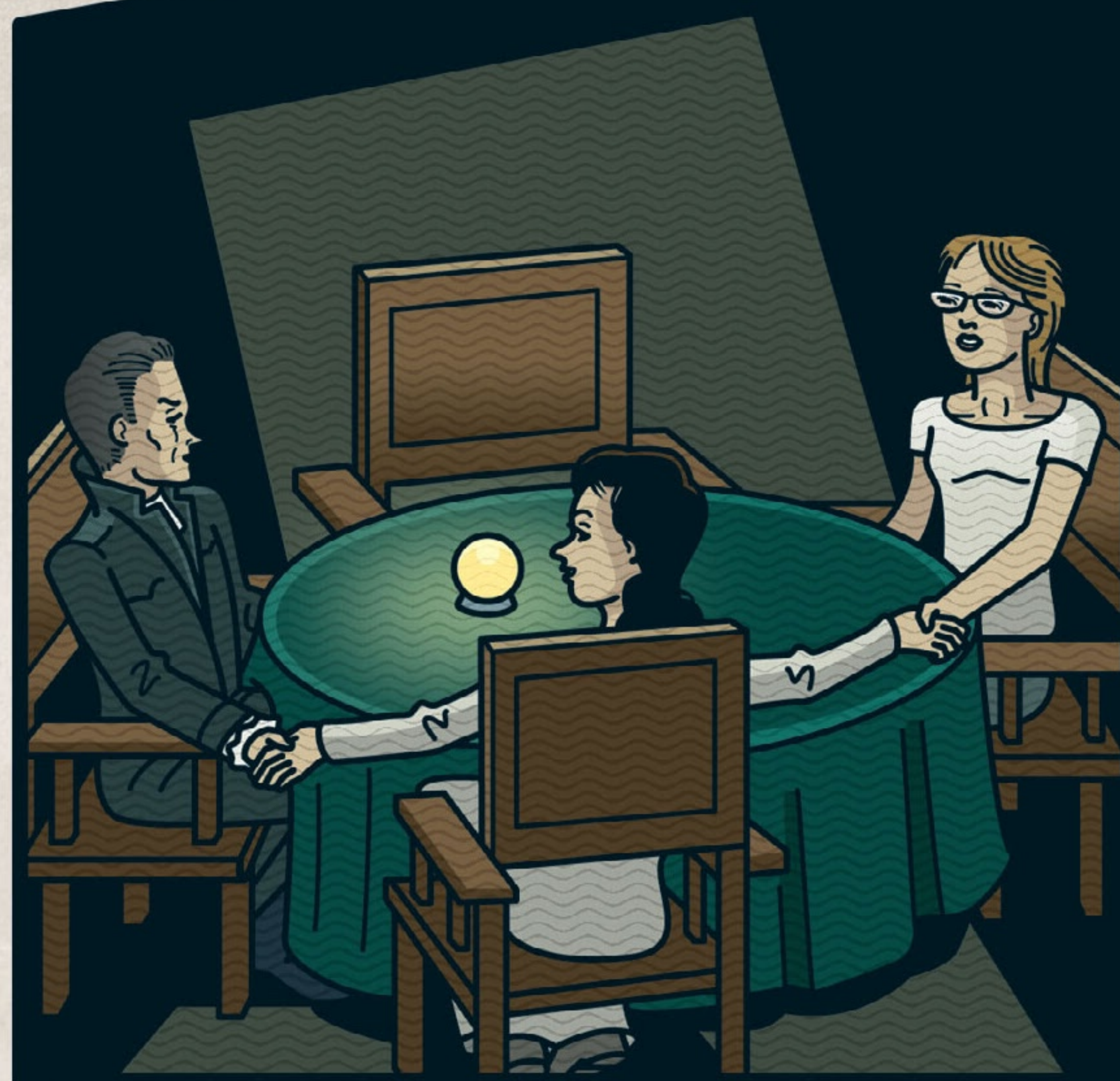
I WANT YOU TO STEAL A PAINTING FROM THE HOME OF A HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER AND BRING IT TO ME. THEN I'LL GRANT YOU YOUR REQUEST. ...IT'S A MARK ROTHKO. I'VE BEEN WANTING IT FOR YEARS.



HADES GESTURED TO THE LARGE TABLE, AND THE FOUR TOOK THEIR SEATS. AS THE LIGHTS DIMMED, THEY ALL JOINED HANDS.

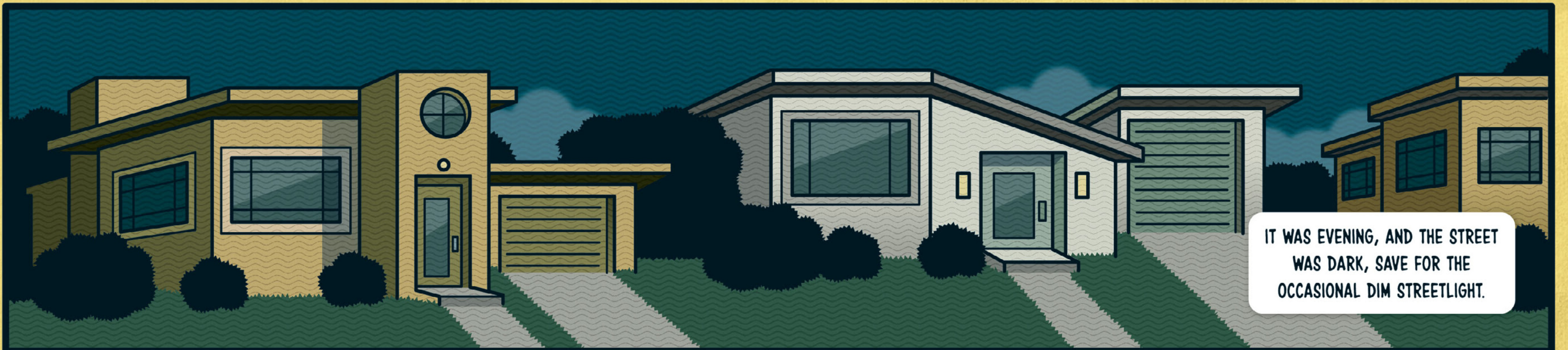
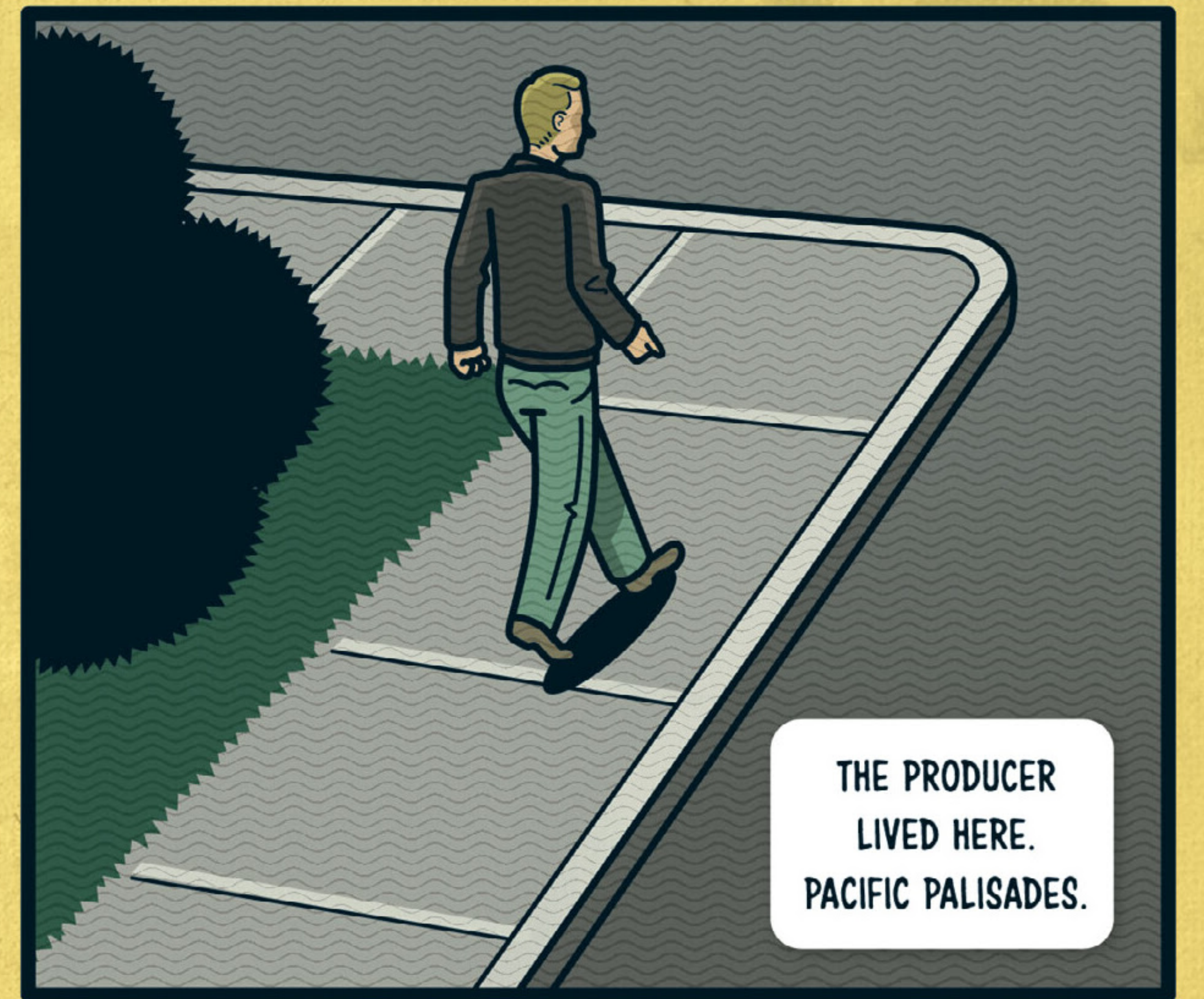


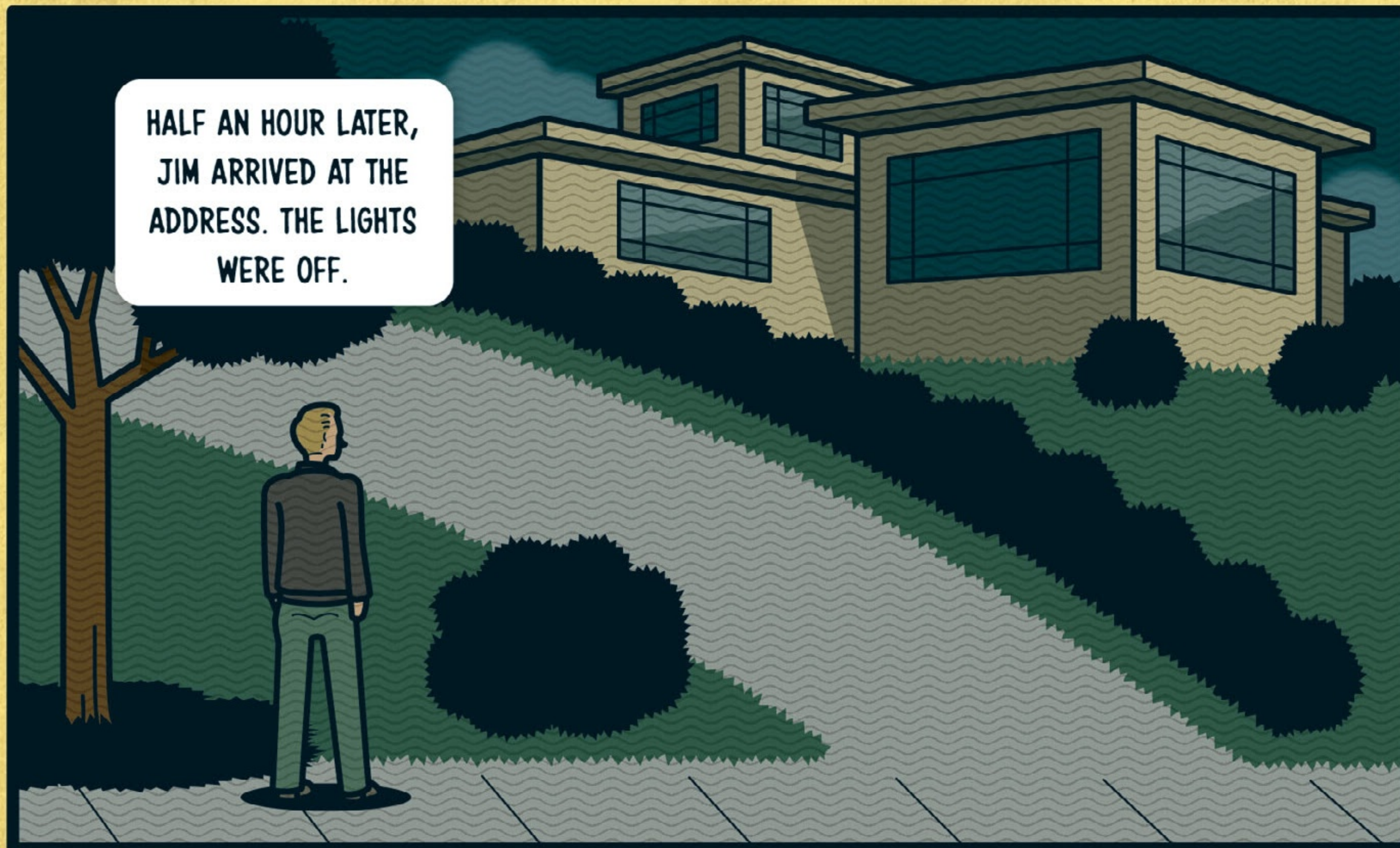
AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, IT WENT DARK AND JIM DISAPPEARED.



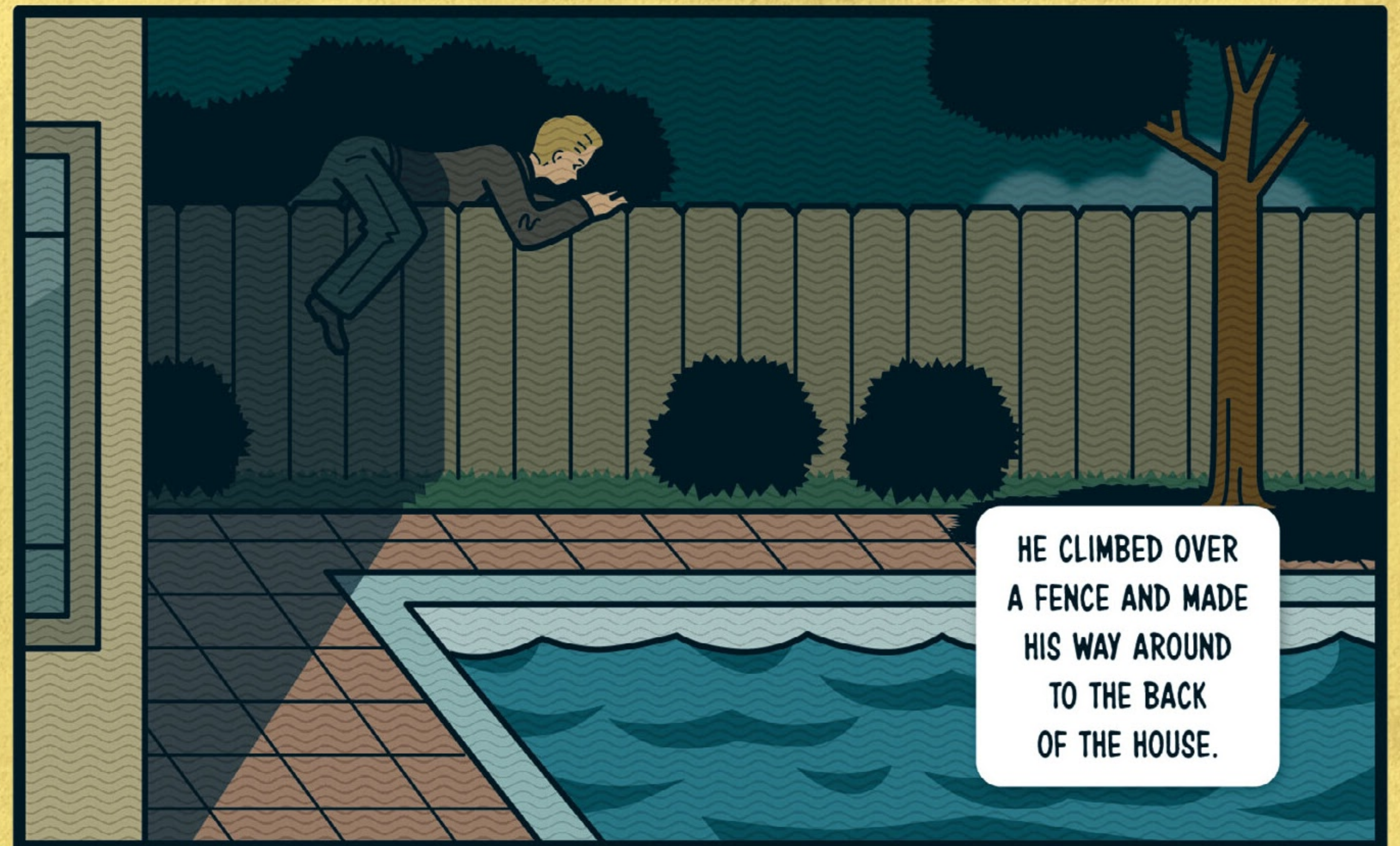
LUNA MEOWED AND JUMPED INTO PERSEPHONE'S LAP.

CHAPTER 23





HALF AN HOUR LATER,
JIM ARRIVED AT THE
ADDRESS. THE LIGHTS
WERE OFF.



HE CLIMBED OVER
A FENCE AND MADE
HIS WAY AROUND
TO THE BACK
OF THE HOUSE.



THE SLIDING DOOR
WAS UNLOCKED. HE
SLOWLY PULLED IT
OPEN AND EASED
INTO THE DARK
LIVING ROOM.

HANGING ON THE WHITE WALL
WAS THE ROTHKO, ITS
DARK RED AND ORANGES
SEEMED TO GLOW
IN THE LOW LIGHT.



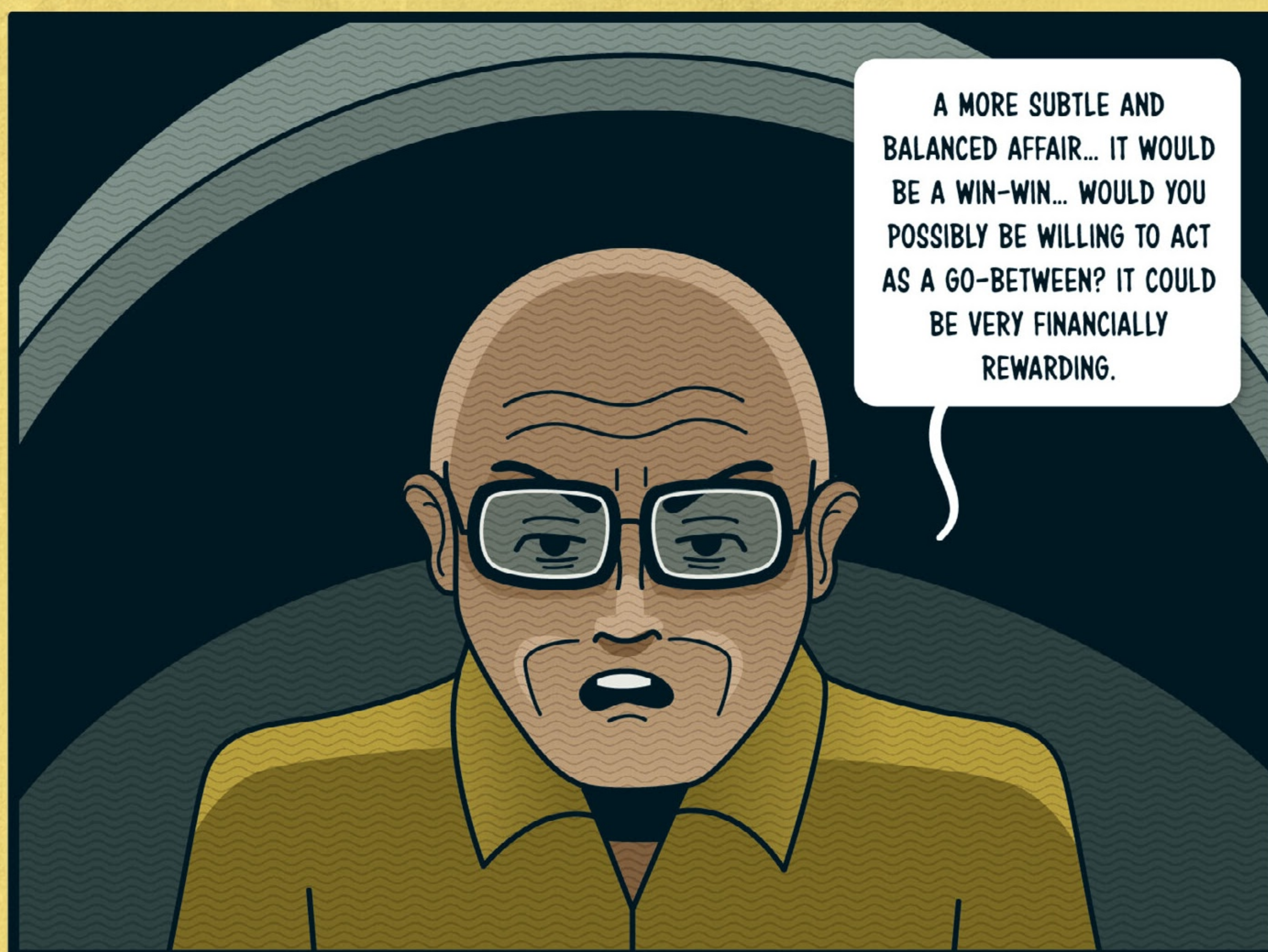
IT'S BEAUTIFUL,
ISN'T IT? EVEN
IN THE DARKNESS.



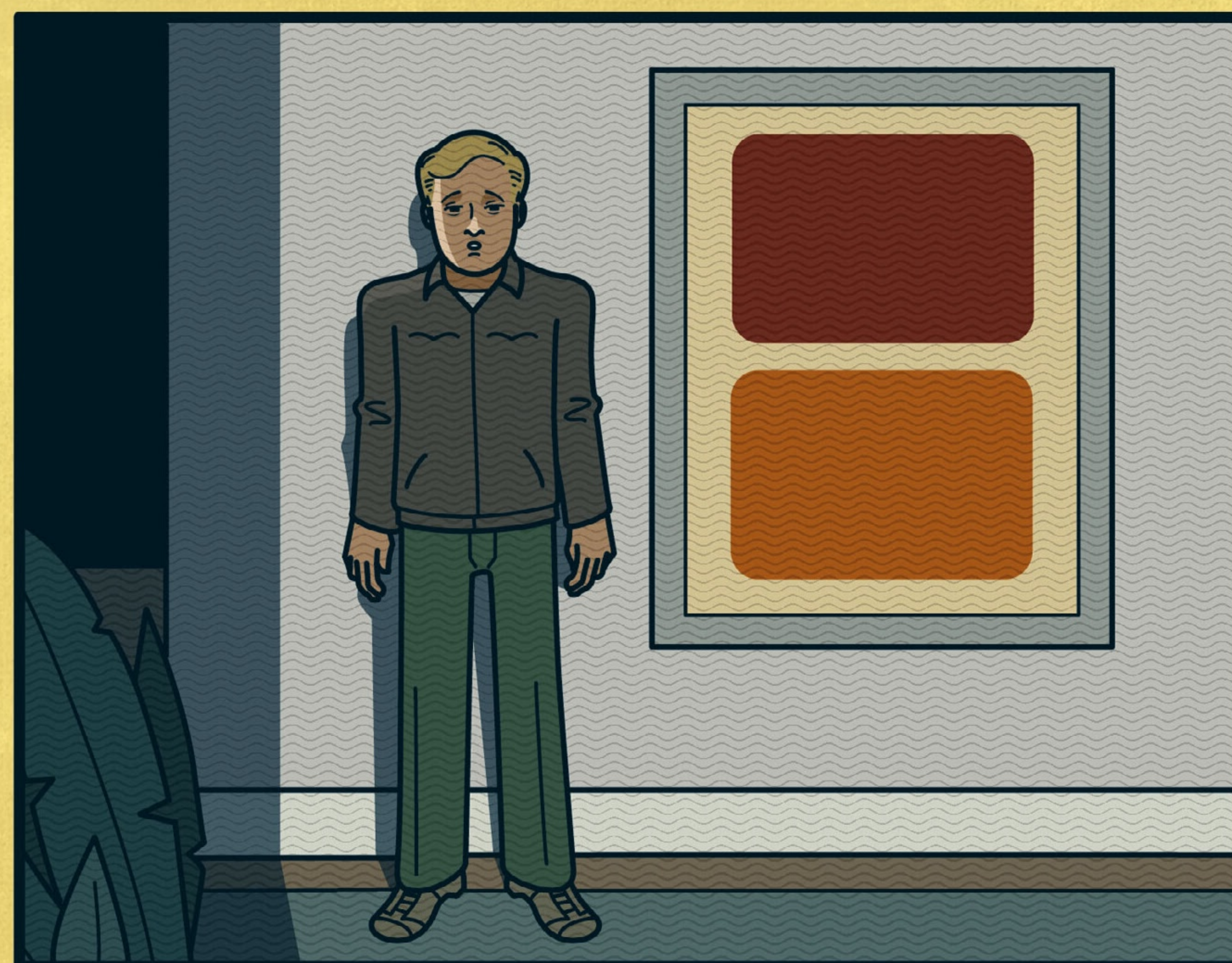
HADES MUST STILL BE MAD OVER THE C.H.A.R.O.N. INCIDENT.
I WANT TO CONVEY TO HIM THAT I HAD NO IDEA THE GOD
OF THE UNDERWORLD OPPOSED SUCH A DEAL...

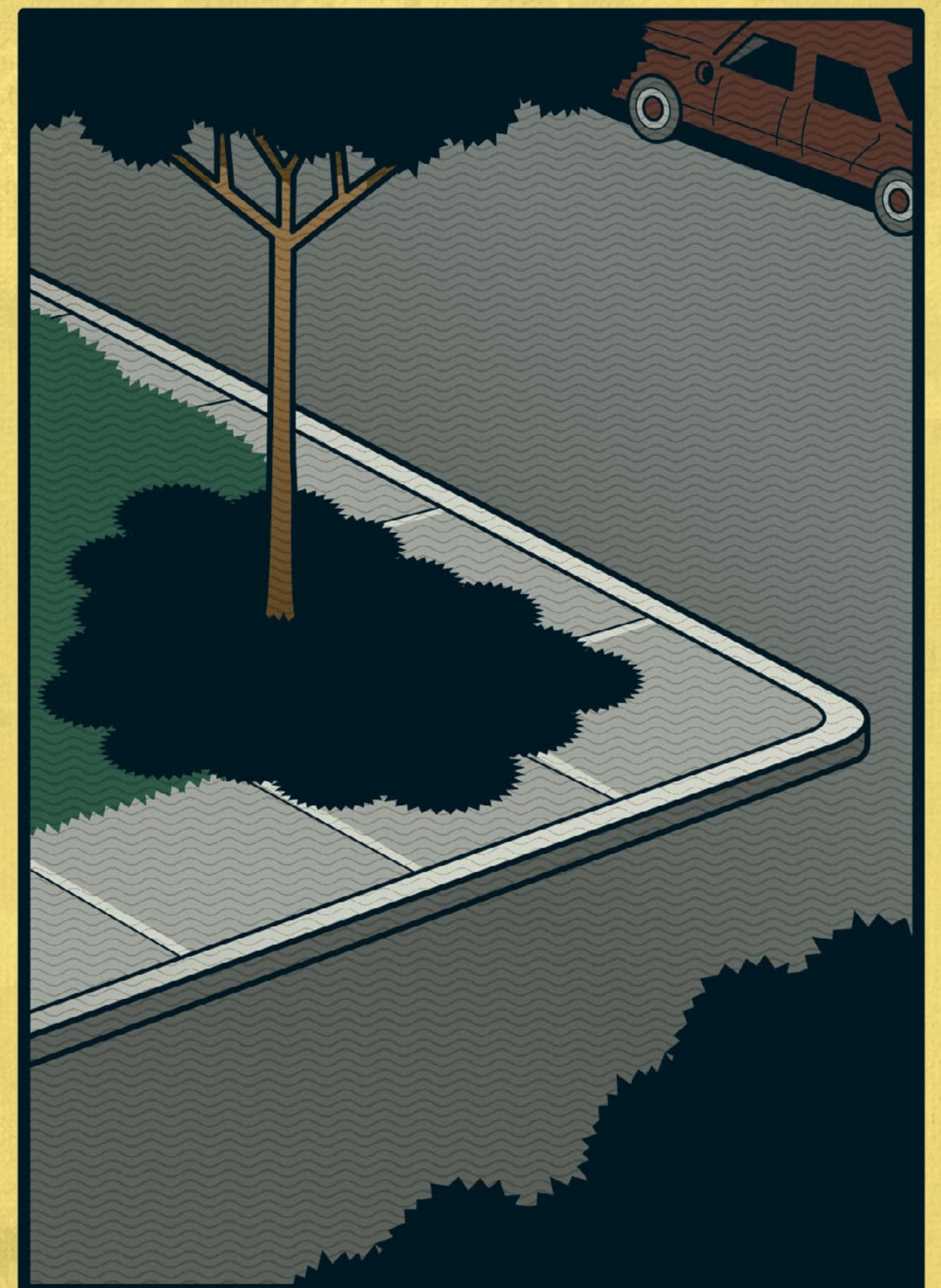
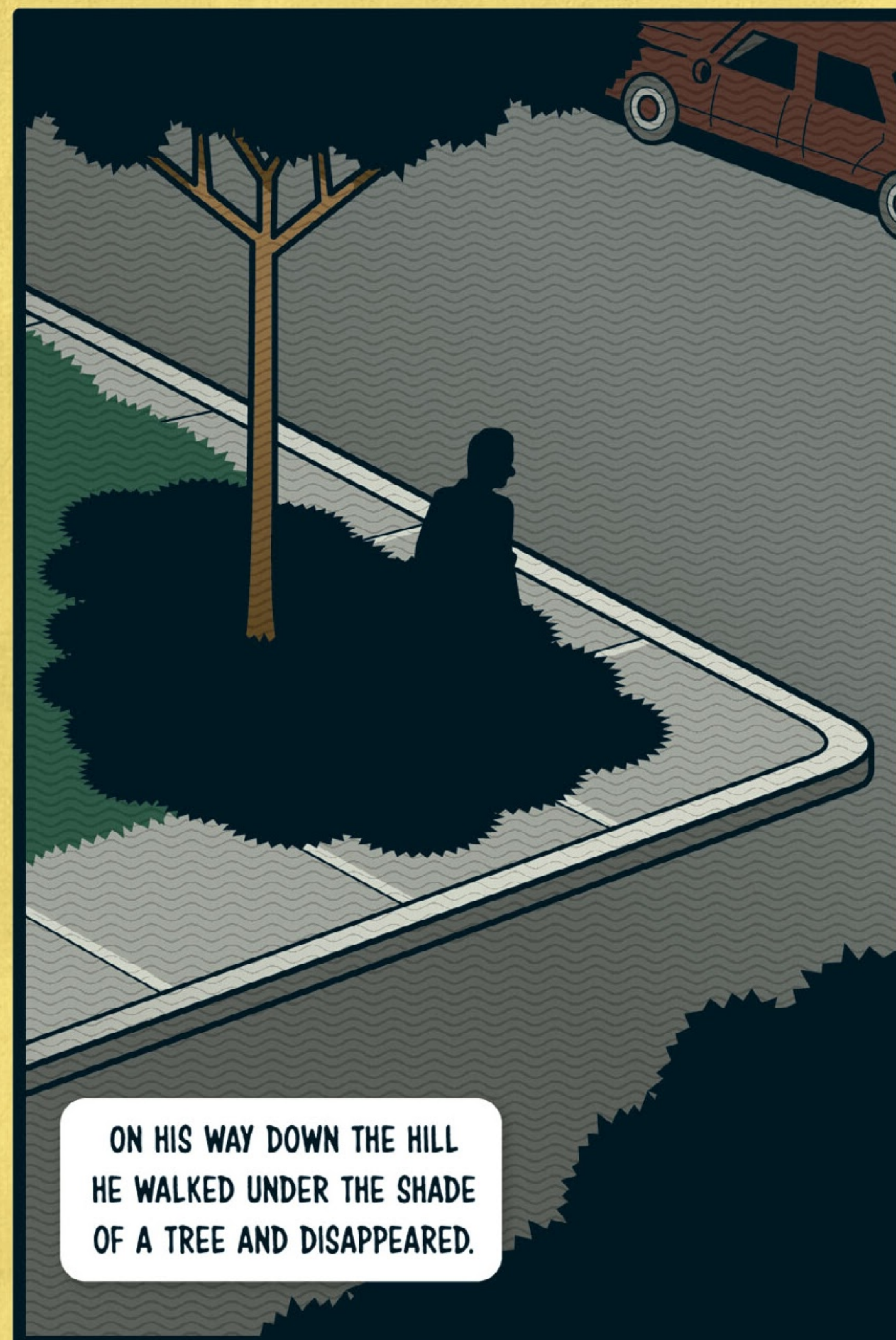


...AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE HADES THAT
I'D NEVER DO ANYTHING BEHIND HIS BACK... AND,
ACTUALLY, I'D LIKE TO PITCH ANOTHER PROJECT...



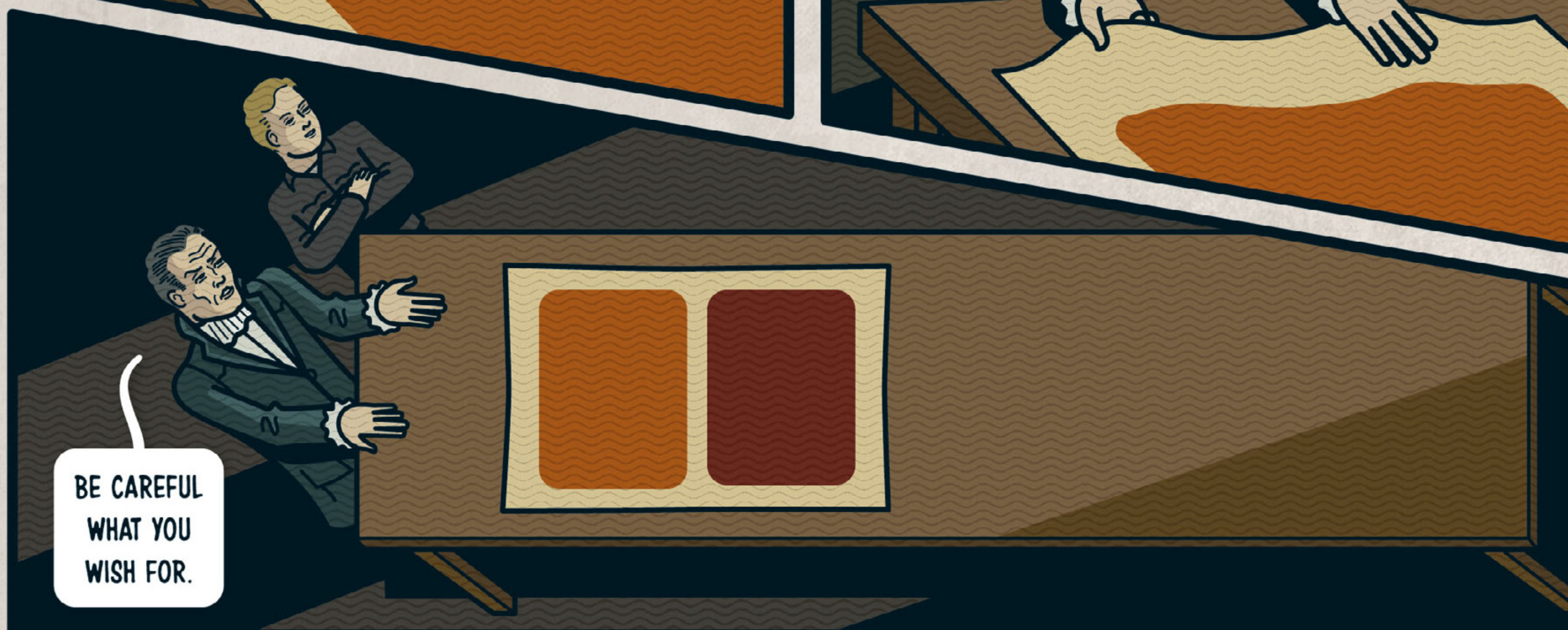
A MORE SUBTLE AND
BALANCED AFFAIR... IT WOULD
BE A WIN-WIN... WOULD YOU
POSSIBLY BE WILLING TO ACT
AS A GO-BETWEEN? IT COULD
BE VERY FINANCIALLY
REWARDING.





CHAPTER

24



HE CALLED JIM OVER TO
THE WINDOW AND POINTED
OUT THE SHADES ARRIVING
FROM ACROSS THE RIVER.
A LONG LINE OF FIGURES
WERE SLOWLY MAKING THEIR
WAY DOWN THE GRAVEL
DRIVEWAY. ONE OF THEM
WAS THE HOLLYWOOD
PRODUCER...



...HE THOUGHT HE HAD
YEARS YET TO LIVE...
MORE DEALS, MORE
PLANS...I WAS NEVER
REALLY THAT ANGRY
WITH HIM BECAUSE
I KNEW HIS TIME
LEFT IN THE LIVING
WORLD WAS SHORT.



HADES SHOOK
HIS HEAD
AND SMILED.

PERSEPHONE
AND OLIVIA
WERE PLAYING
WITH THE CAT.



PERSEPHONE HAD BECOME
FOND OF OLIVIA AND
ENJOYED HER COMPANY.



SHE HAD CONVINCED HADES
THAT JIM AND OLIVIA
DESERVED A CHANCE...



...TO ENJOY THE
LIVING WORLD
ONCE MORE.

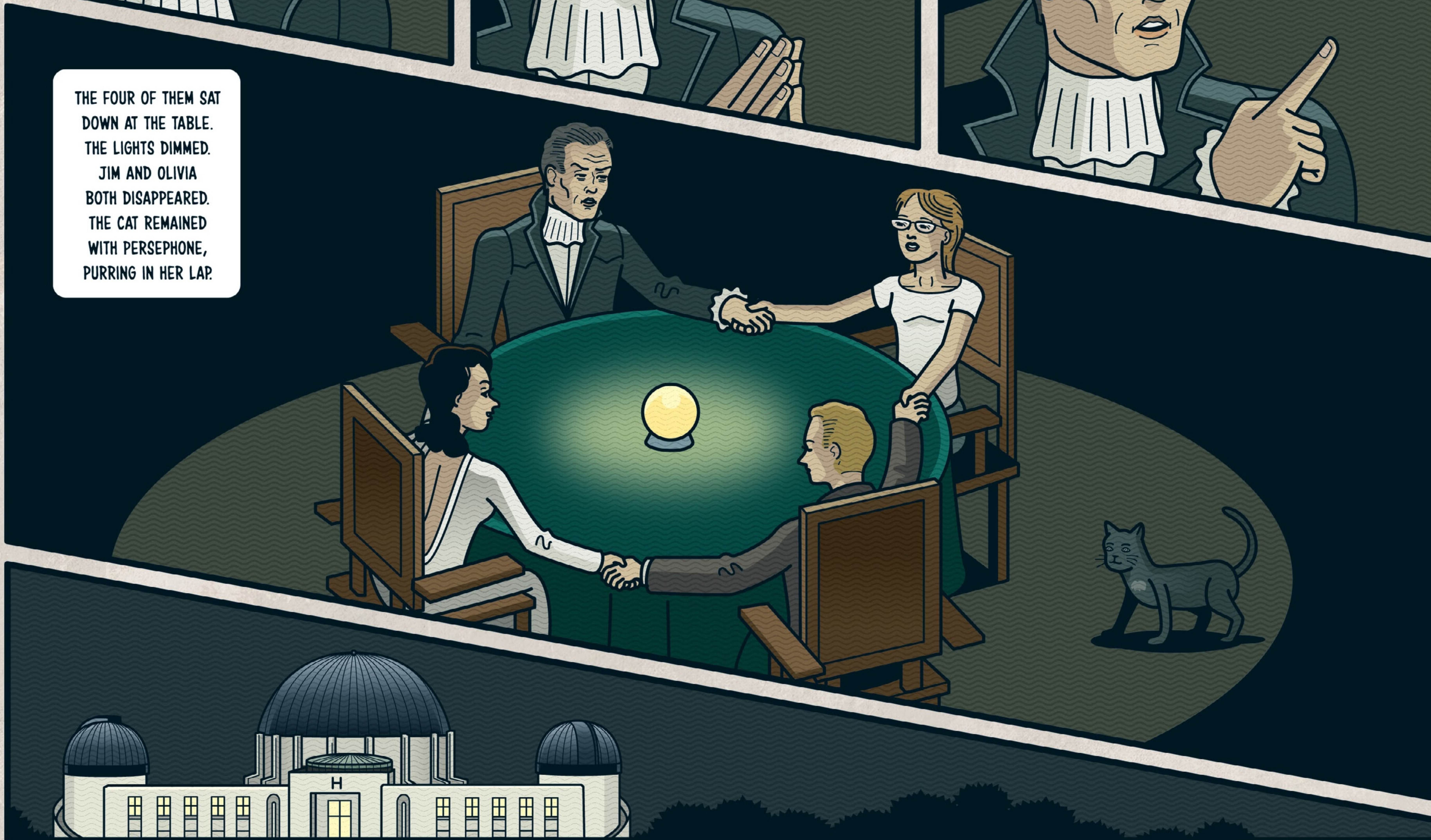


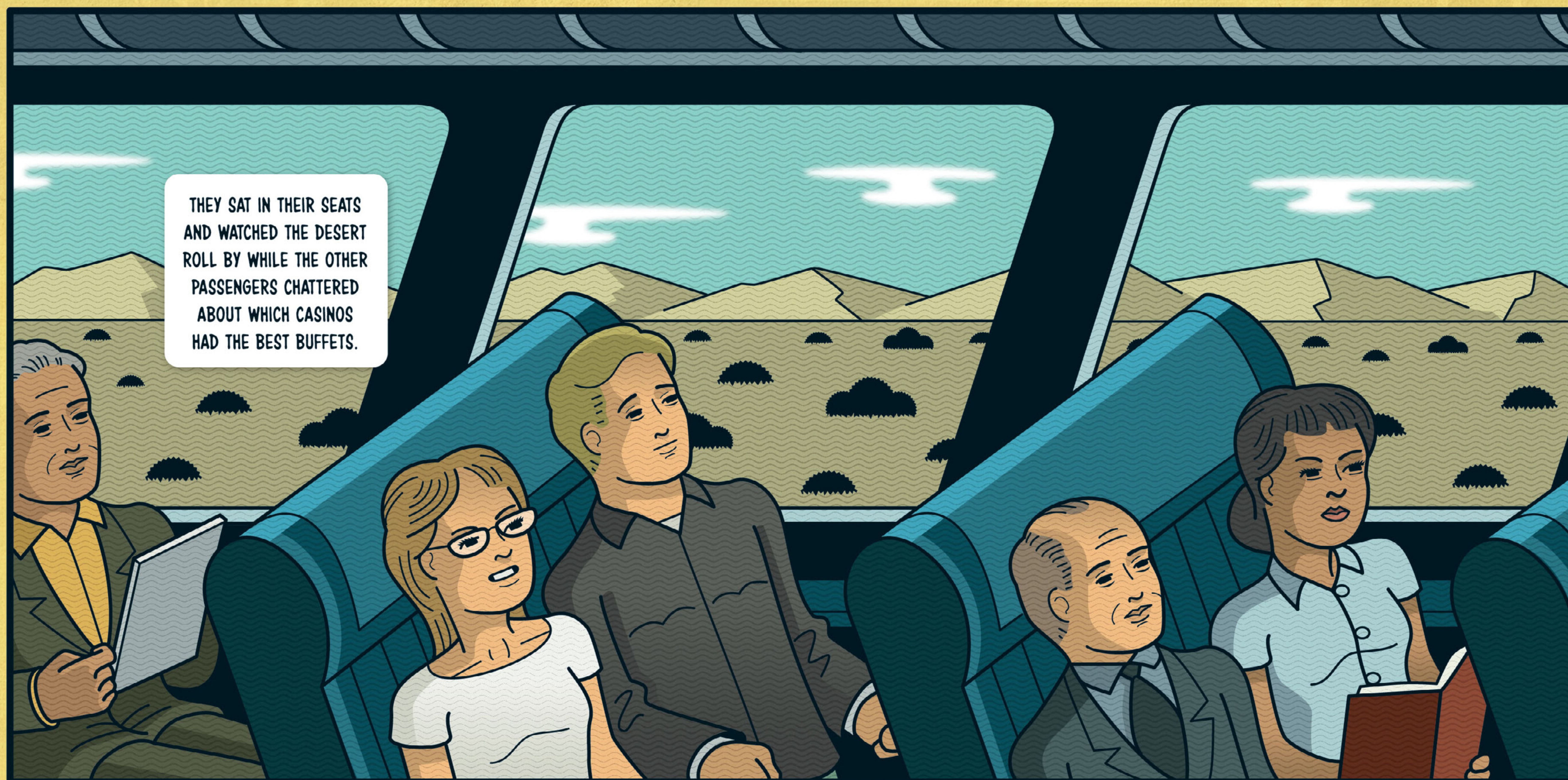
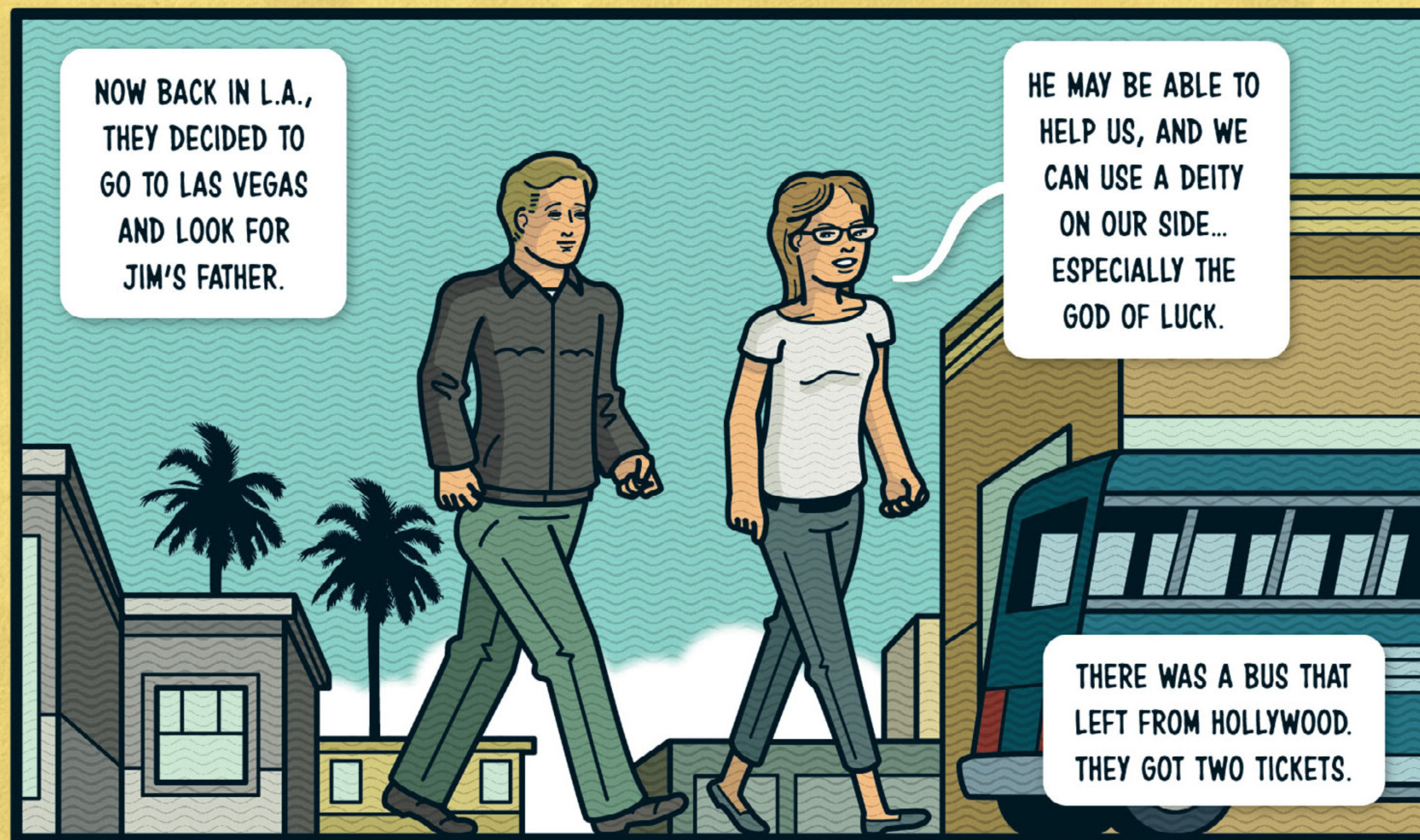
LIKE I NEVER
GET TO DO.

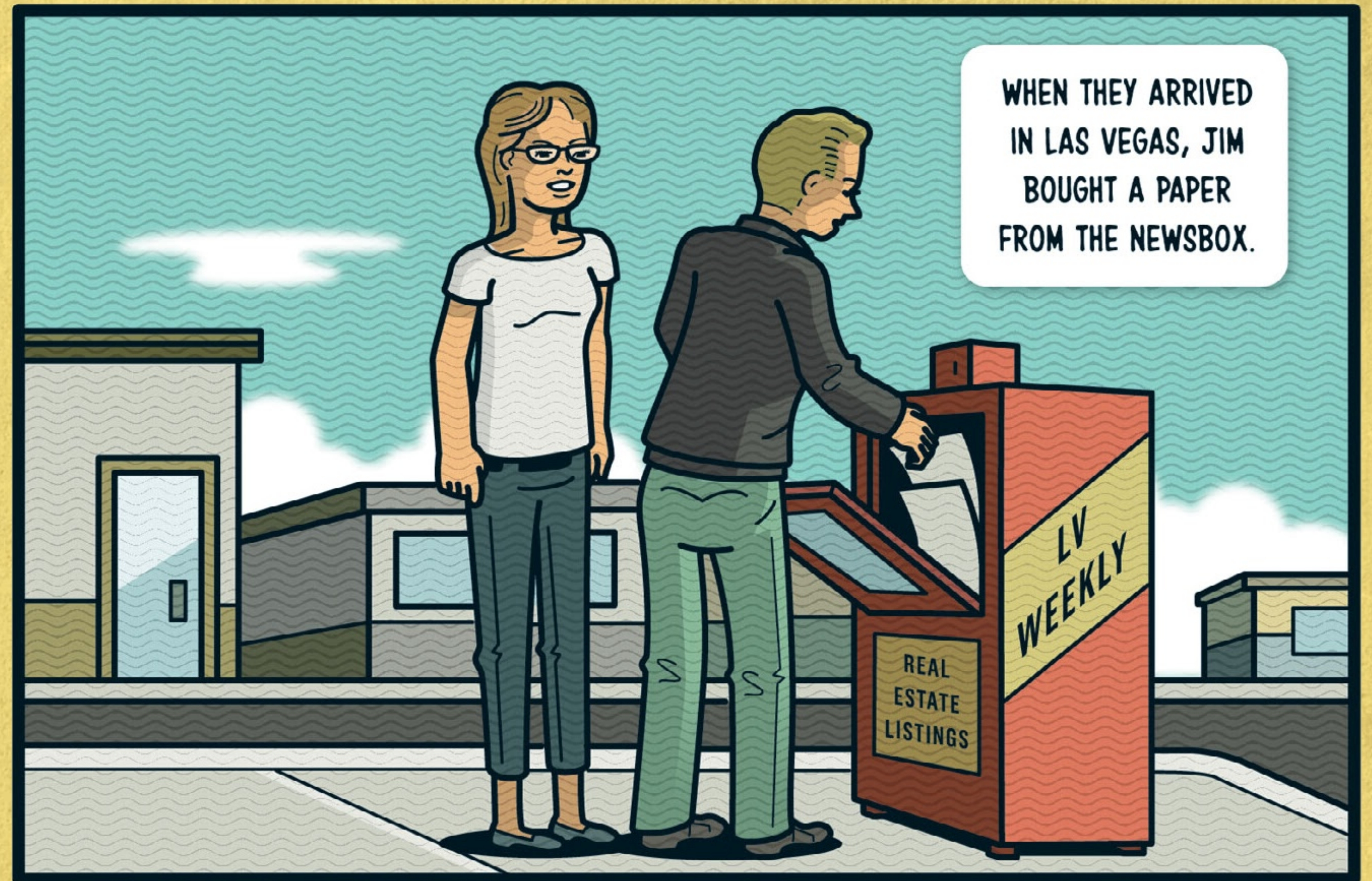
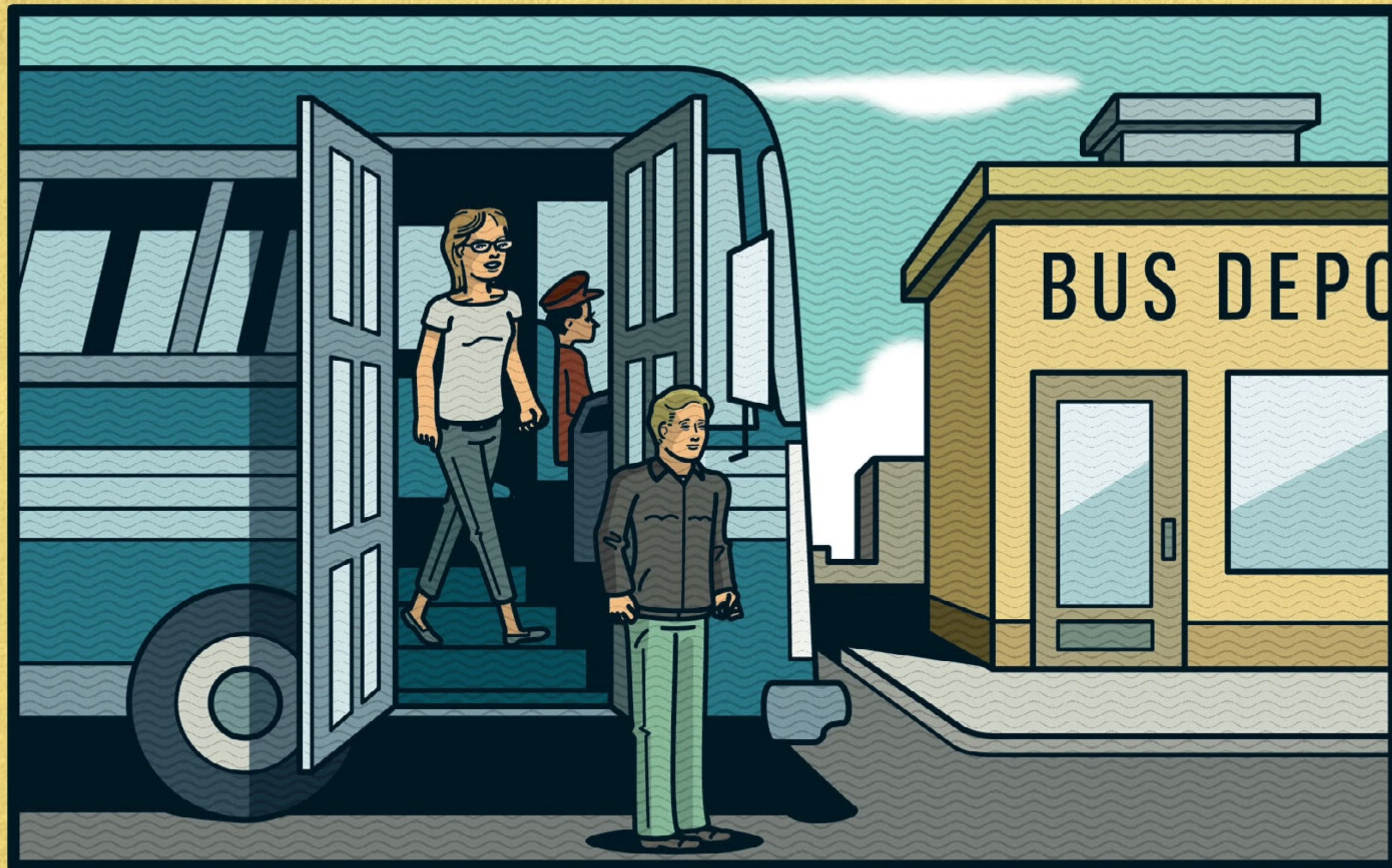




THE FOUR OF THEM SAT DOWN AT THE TABLE. THE LIGHTS DIMMED. JIM AND OLIVIA BOTH DISAPPEARED. THE CAT REMAINED WITH PERSEPHONE, PURRING IN HER LAP.



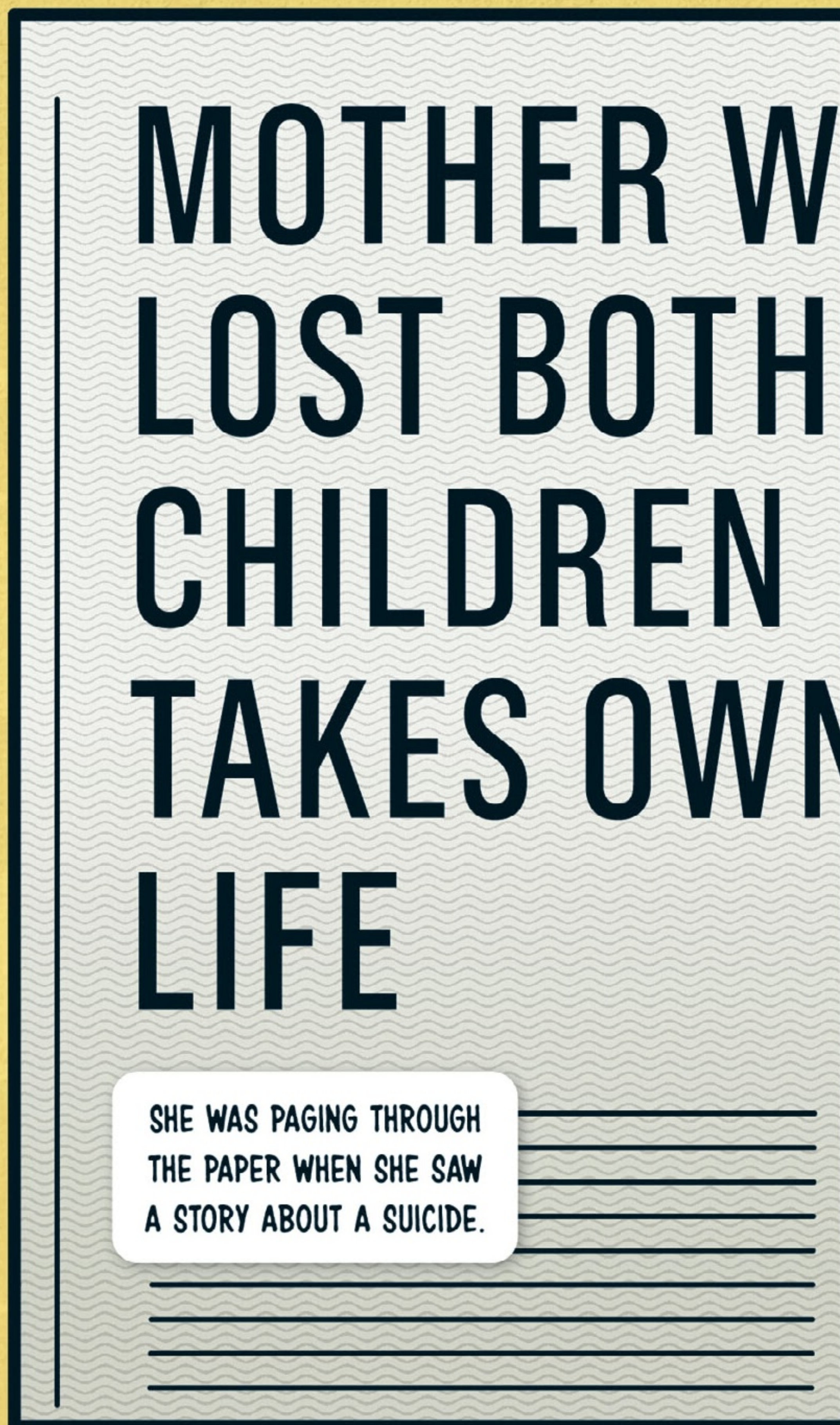




WHEN THEY ARRIVED
IN LAS VEGAS, JIM
BOUGHT A PAPER
FROM THE NEWSBOX.



IT WAS FILLED WITH ADS FOR BUDGET HOTELS.
HE ASKED OLIVIA TO FIND THEM A PLACE TO STAY.



SHE WAS PAGING THROUGH
THE PAPER WHEN SHE SAW
A STORY ABOUT A SUICIDE.



A LARGE PHOTO ACCOMPANIED
THE STORY. IT WAS HER MOM...

MOTHER OF TWO

OLIVIA HAD SEEN HER MOTHER, JUST AS HADES HAD WARNED. SHE IMMEDIATELY REALIZED HER MISTAKE...



JIM LOOKED OVER AND SAW THAT SHE WAS GONE.



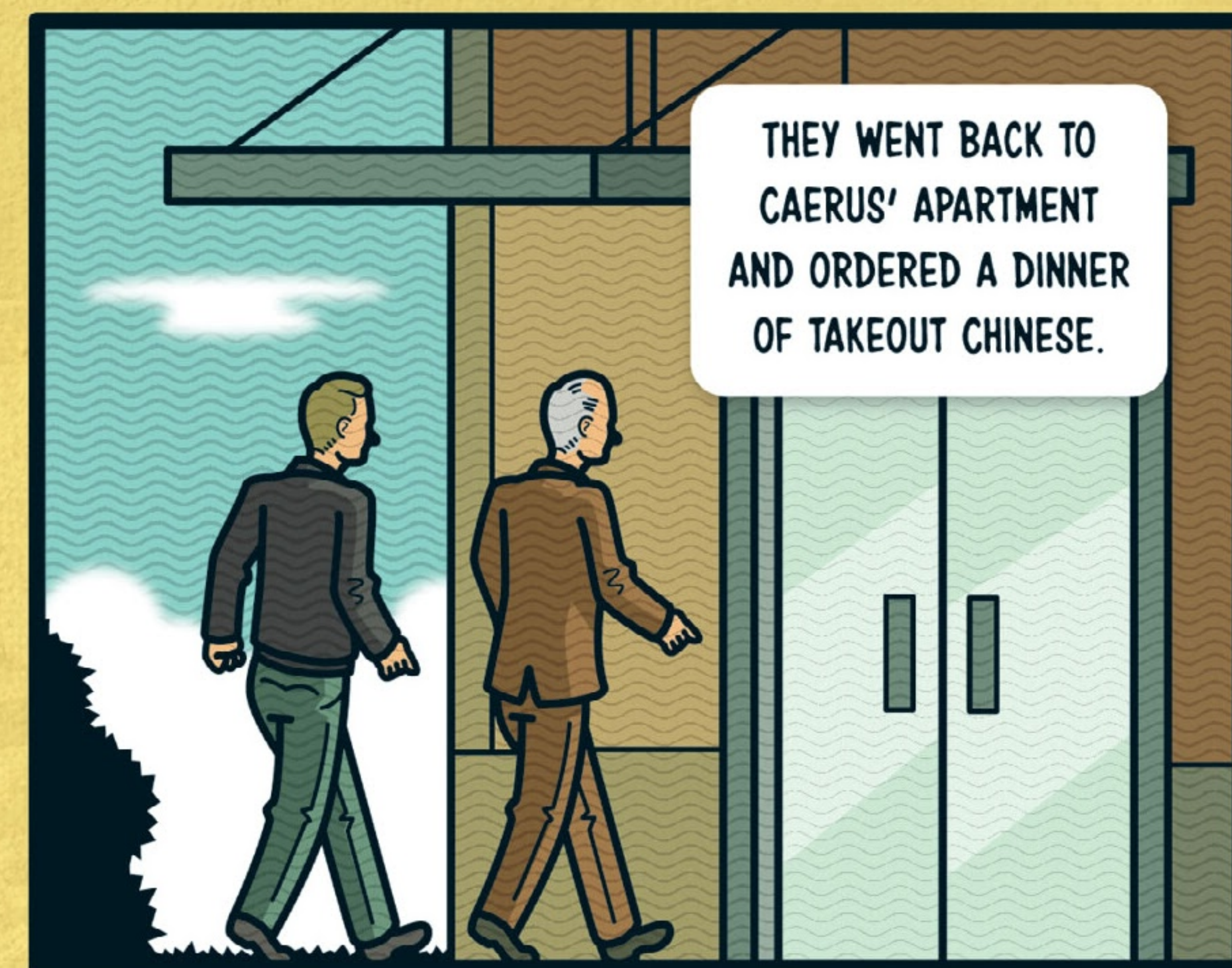
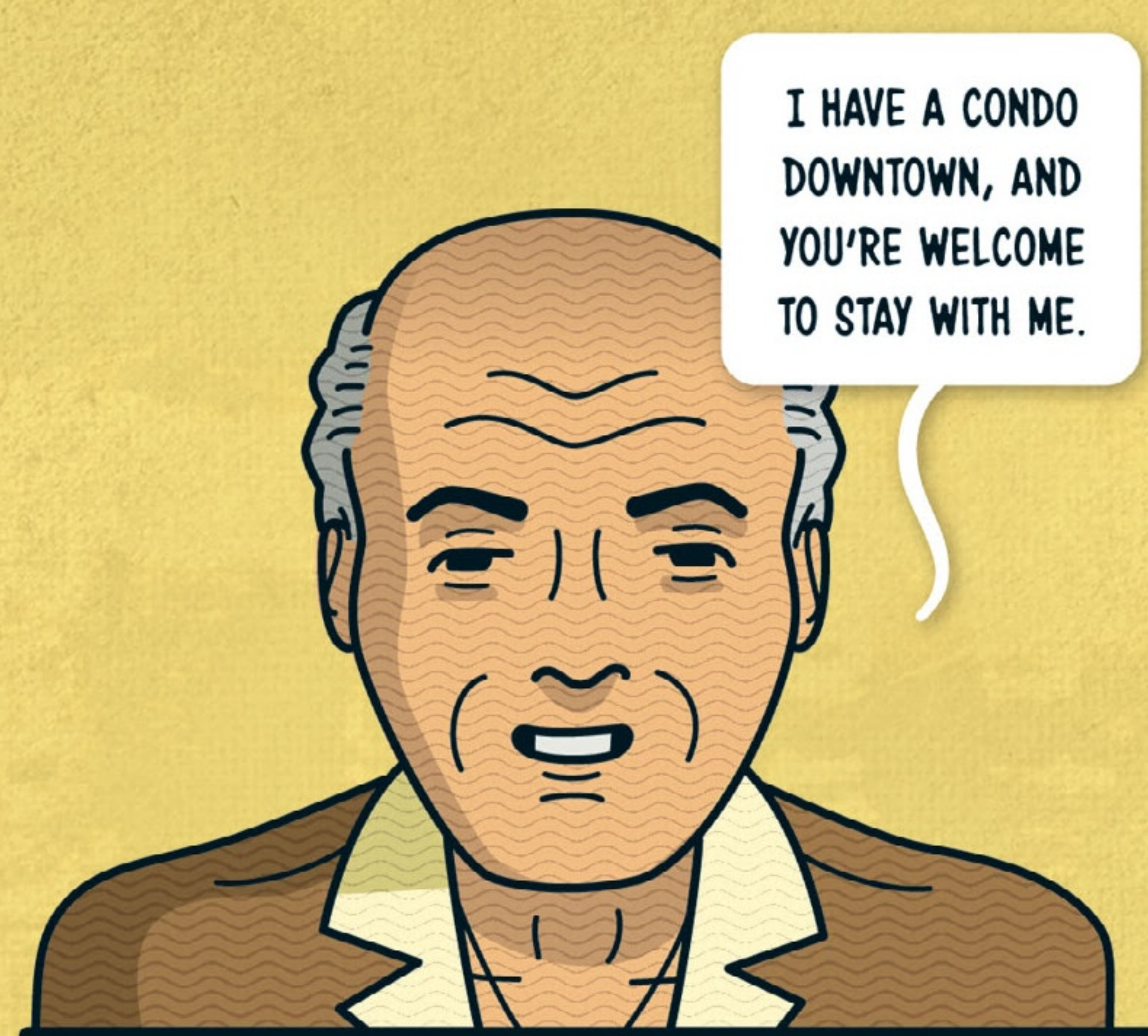
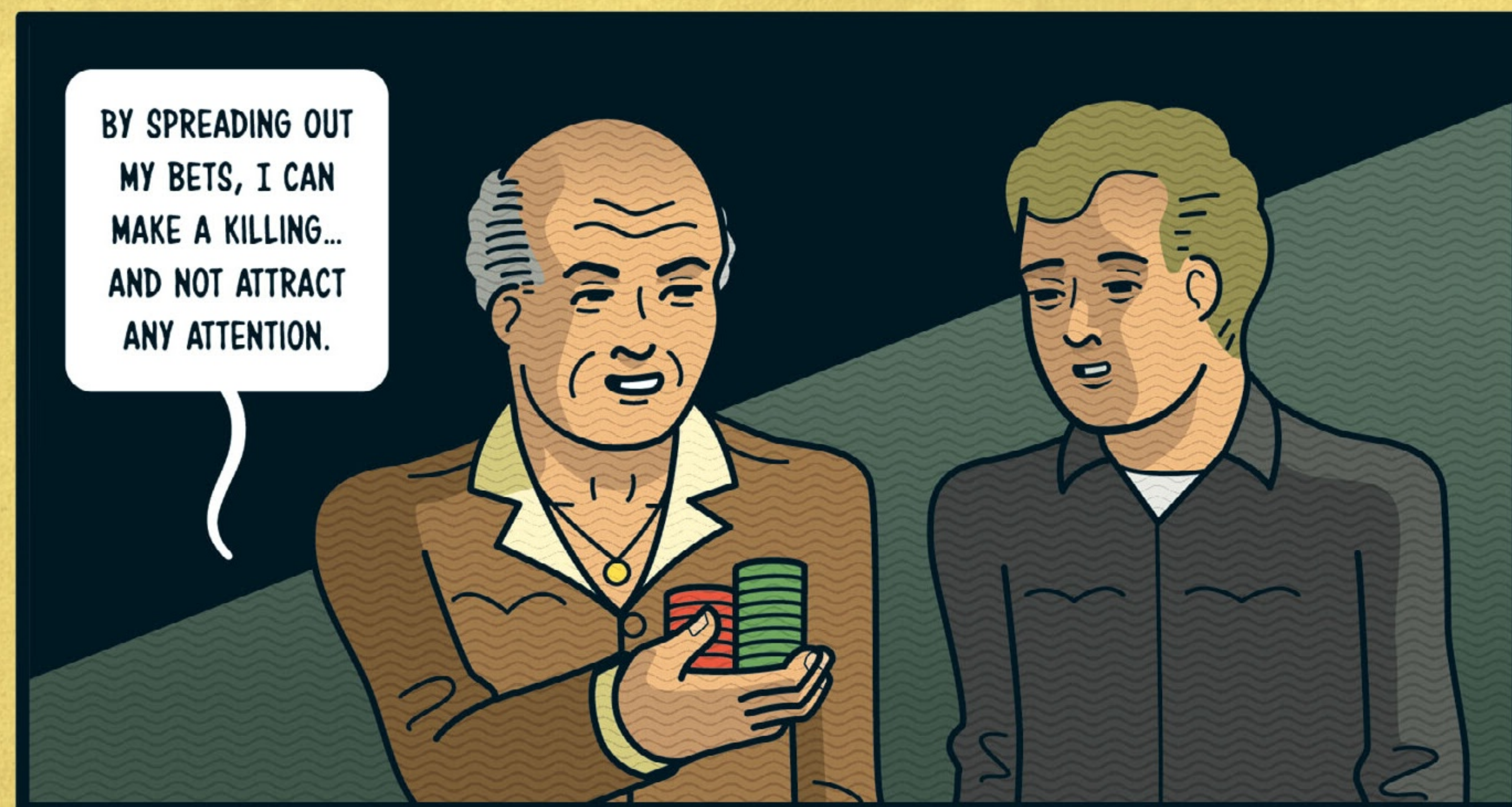
THE PAPER WAS LEFT FLAPPING ON THE BENCH. JIM LOOKED DOWN, SAW THE PHOTO OF OLIVIA'S MOTHER, AND INSTANTLY KNEW...



JIM HAD TO FIND HIS FATHER. MAYBE HE COULD HELP GET OLIVIA BACK INTO THE LIVING WORLD ONCE MORE...



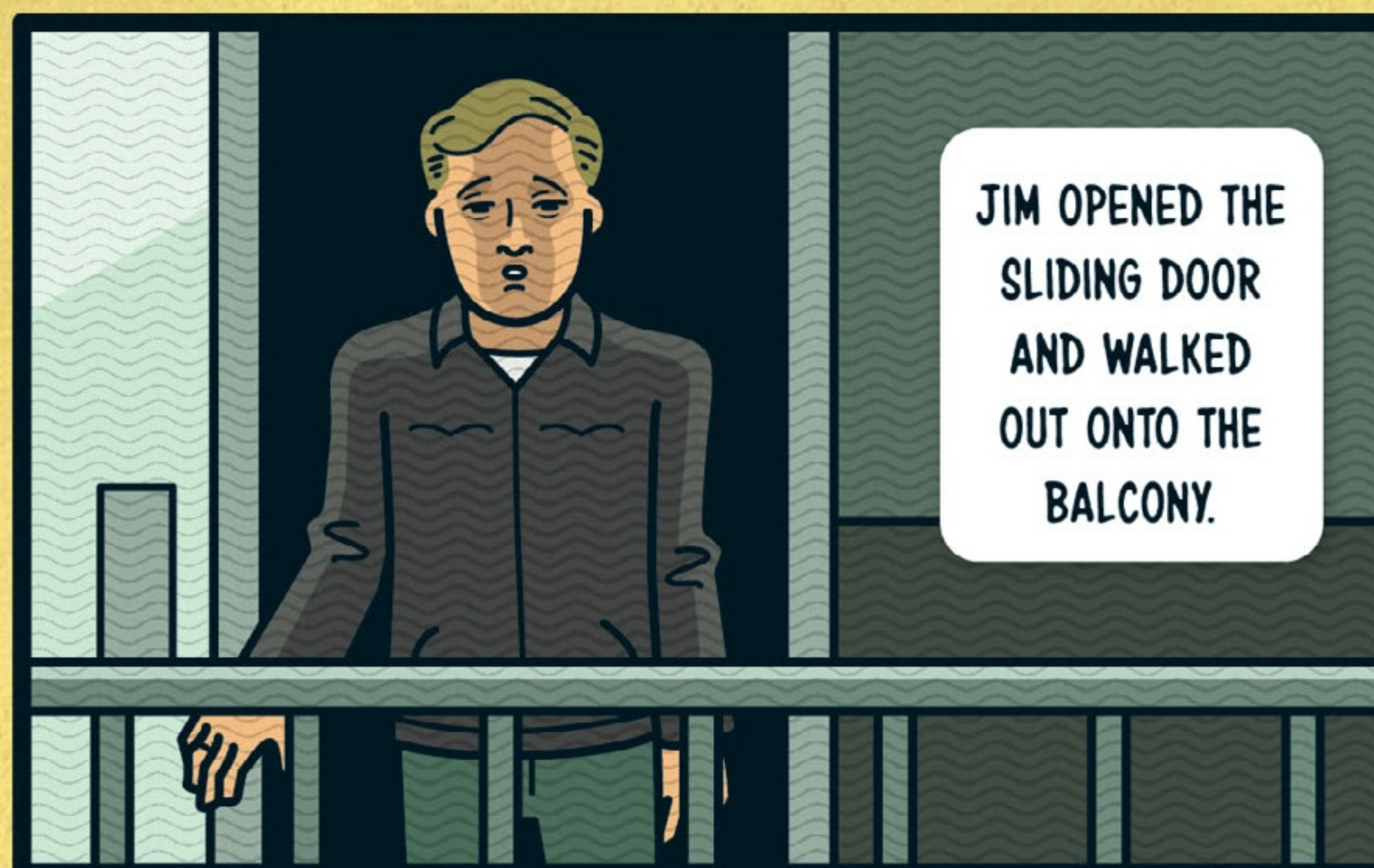




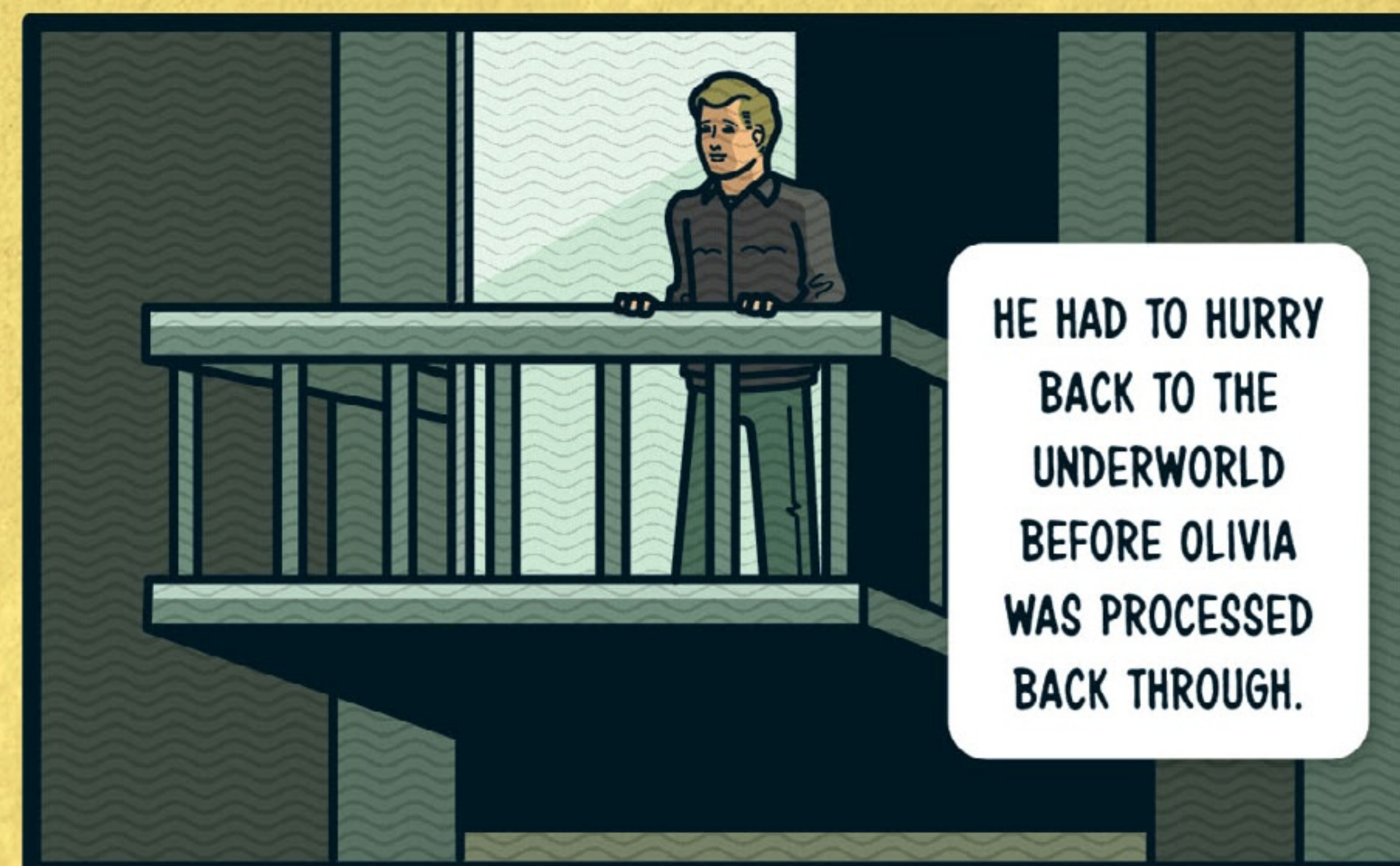


CAERUS
GAVE HIM
A RING.

TRY WEARING THIS WHEN
YOU GO BACK. IT WILL
BRING YOU LUCK... IF YOU
CAN GET HADES TO MAKE
A WAGER, YOU'LL WIN.



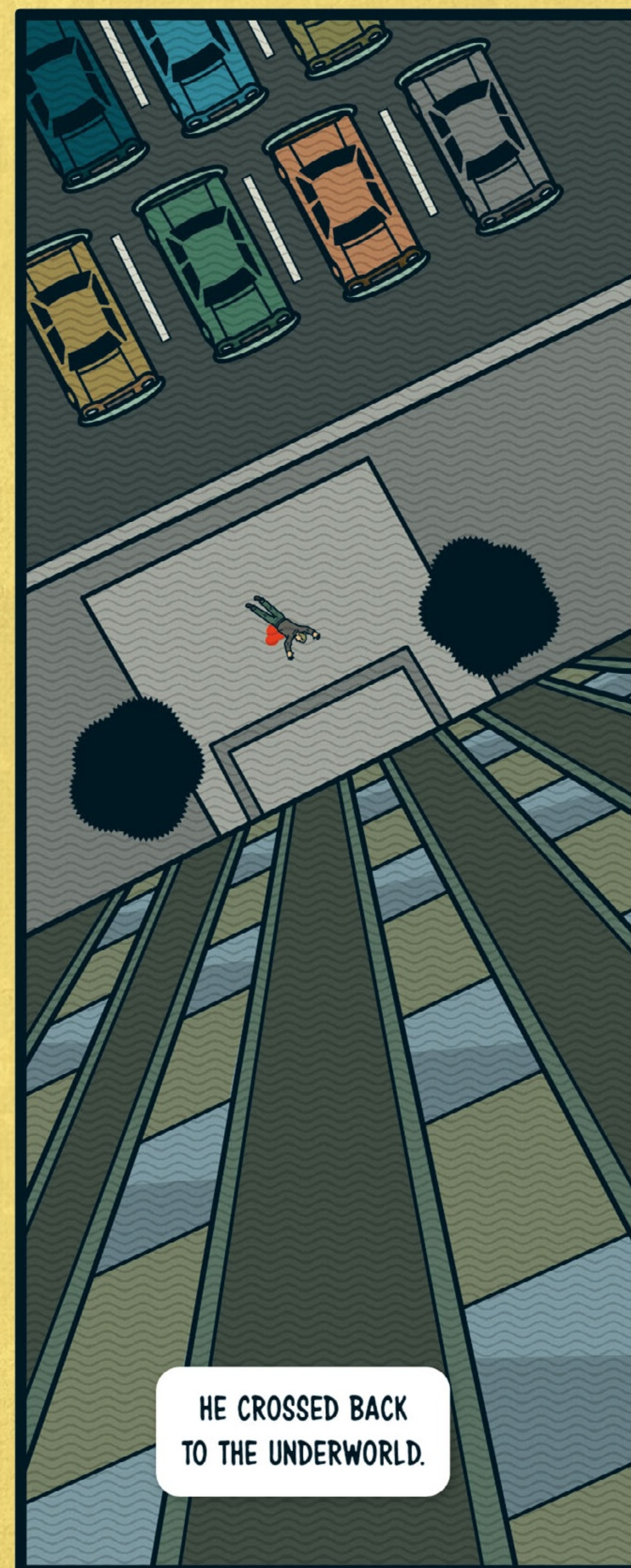
JIM OPENED THE
SLIDING DOOR
AND WALKED
OUT ONTO THE
BALCONY.



HE HAD TO HURRY
BACK TO THE
UNDERWORLD
BEFORE OLIVIA
WAS PROCESSED
BACK THROUGH.



JIM CLIMBED
UP ONTO THE
RAILING AND
JUMPED OFF
INTO THE NIGHT.



HE CROSSED BACK
TO THE UNDERWORLD.

CHAPTER 26

AFTER A LONG WAIT, THE GATE OPENED AND JIM WAS ALLOWED IN. HE WALKED UP THE GRAVEL PATH AND WAS ADMITTED INTO THE MANSION.

HADES WAS FURIOUS. JIM TRIED TO EXPLAIN, BUT THE GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD CUT HIM OFF.

AFTER ALL I DID FOR YOU.

ENOUGH OF THIS. BOTH OF YOU ARE GOING INTO JARS... FOR ETERNITY.

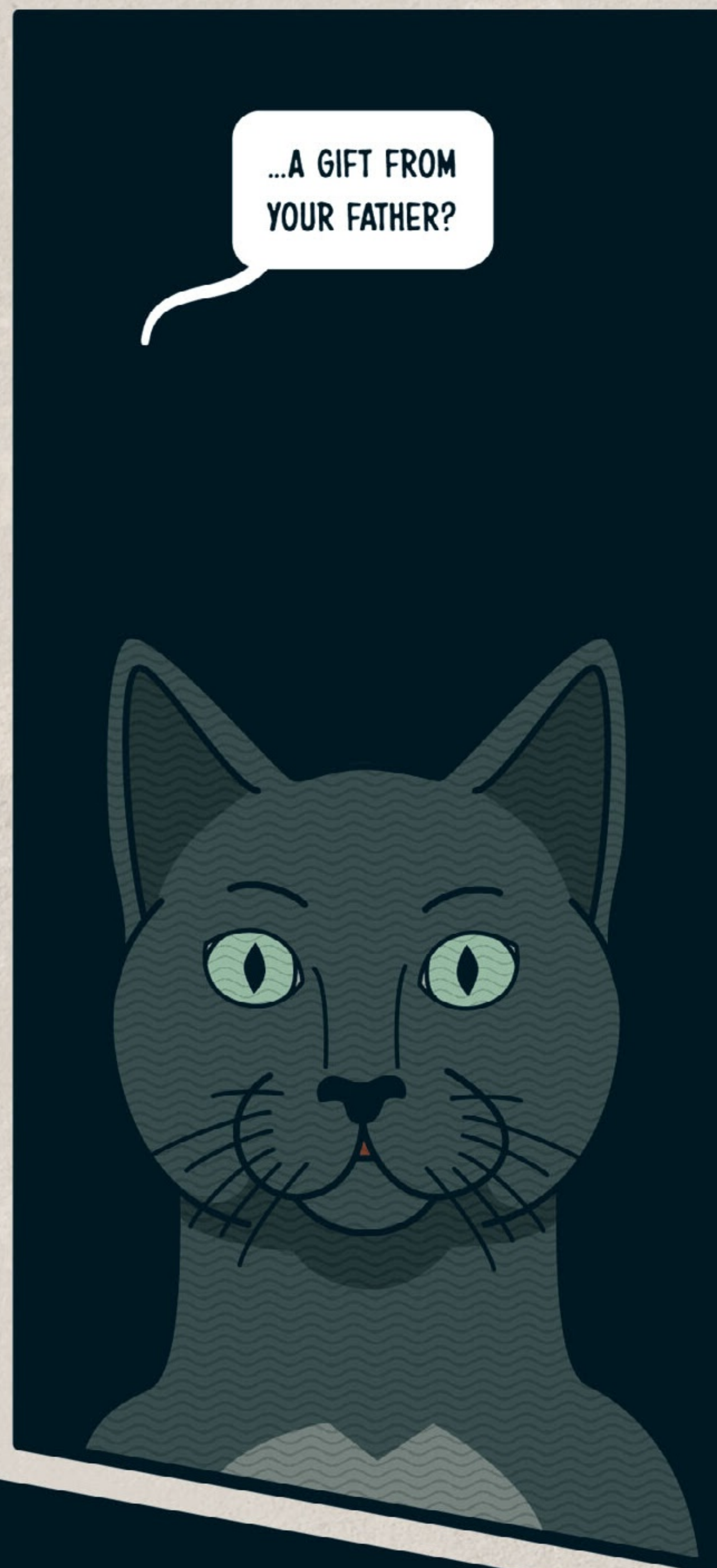




LUNA WAS
PLACED ON THE
FLOOR HALFWAY
BETWEEN
JIM AND
PERSEPHONE.



HADES NOTED
THE RING ON
JIM'S FINGER.



...A GIFT FROM
YOUR FATHER?



THE
TENSION
ROSE...



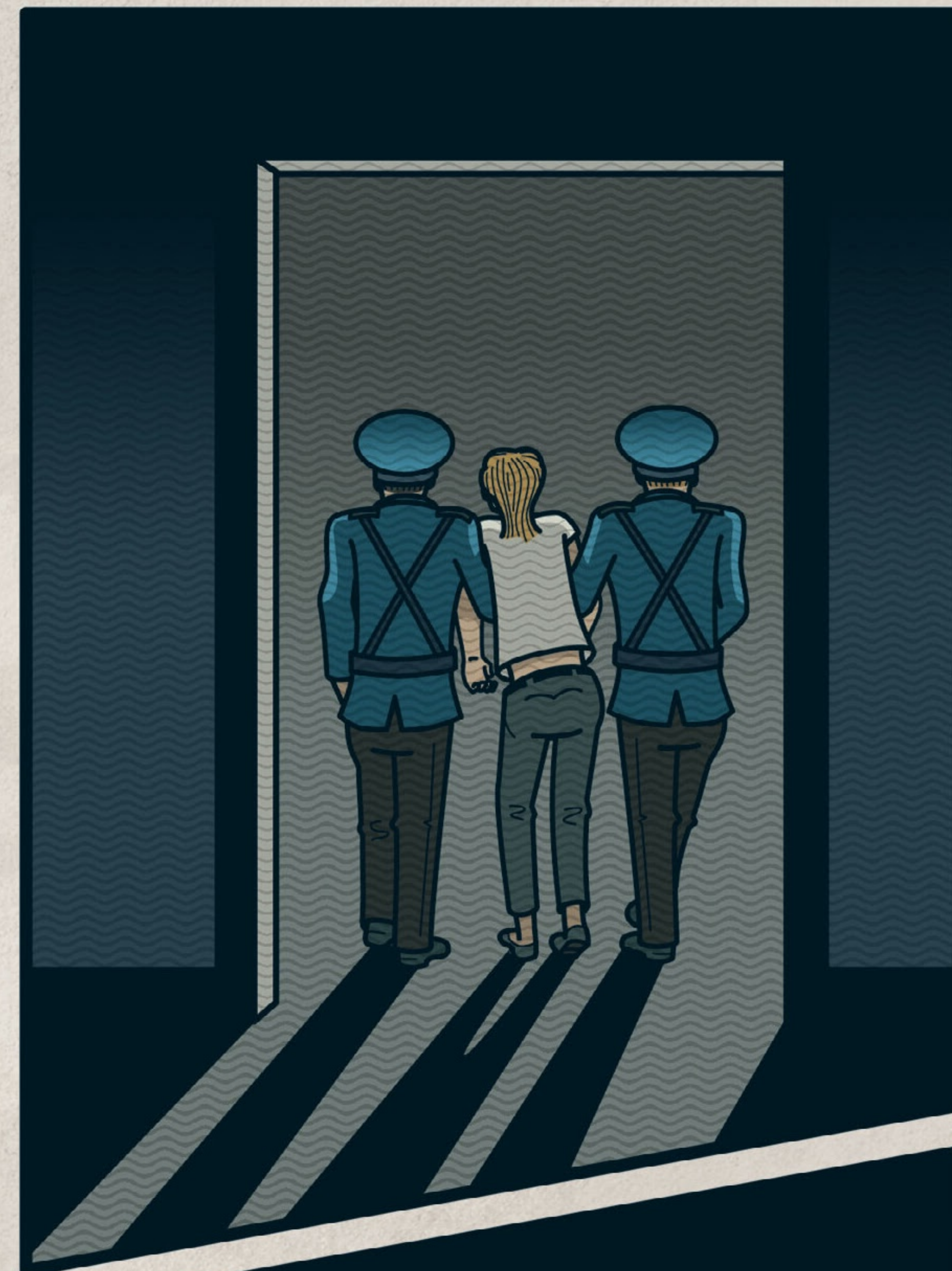
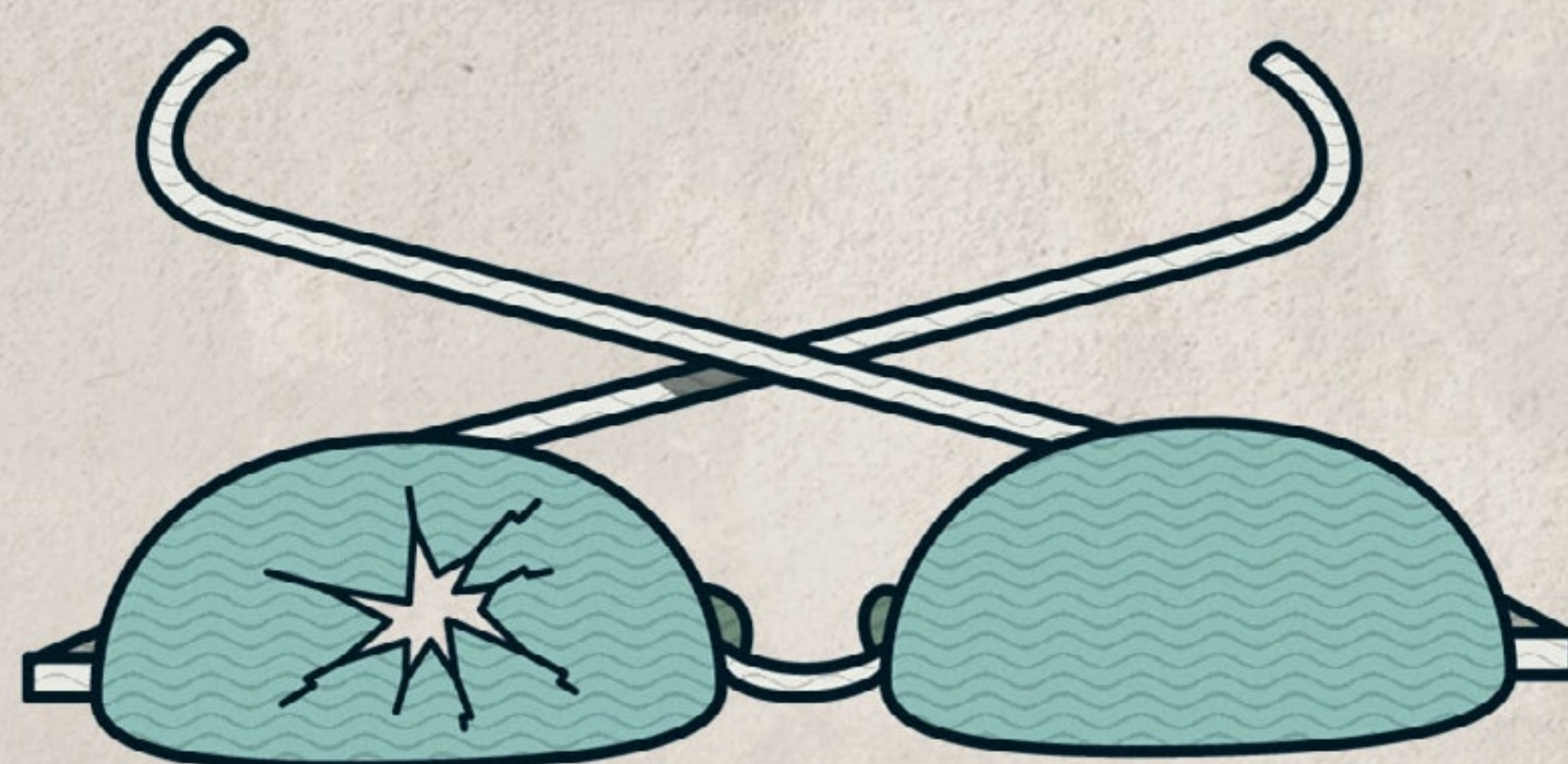
AFTER SEVERAL
MINUTES, LUNA
TURNED AND
JUMPED INTO
PERSEPHONE'S
ARMS.



SHE SWEEPED HER UP
AND WALKED OUT
OF THE ROOM,
COMPLAINING
ABOUT THE COLD.



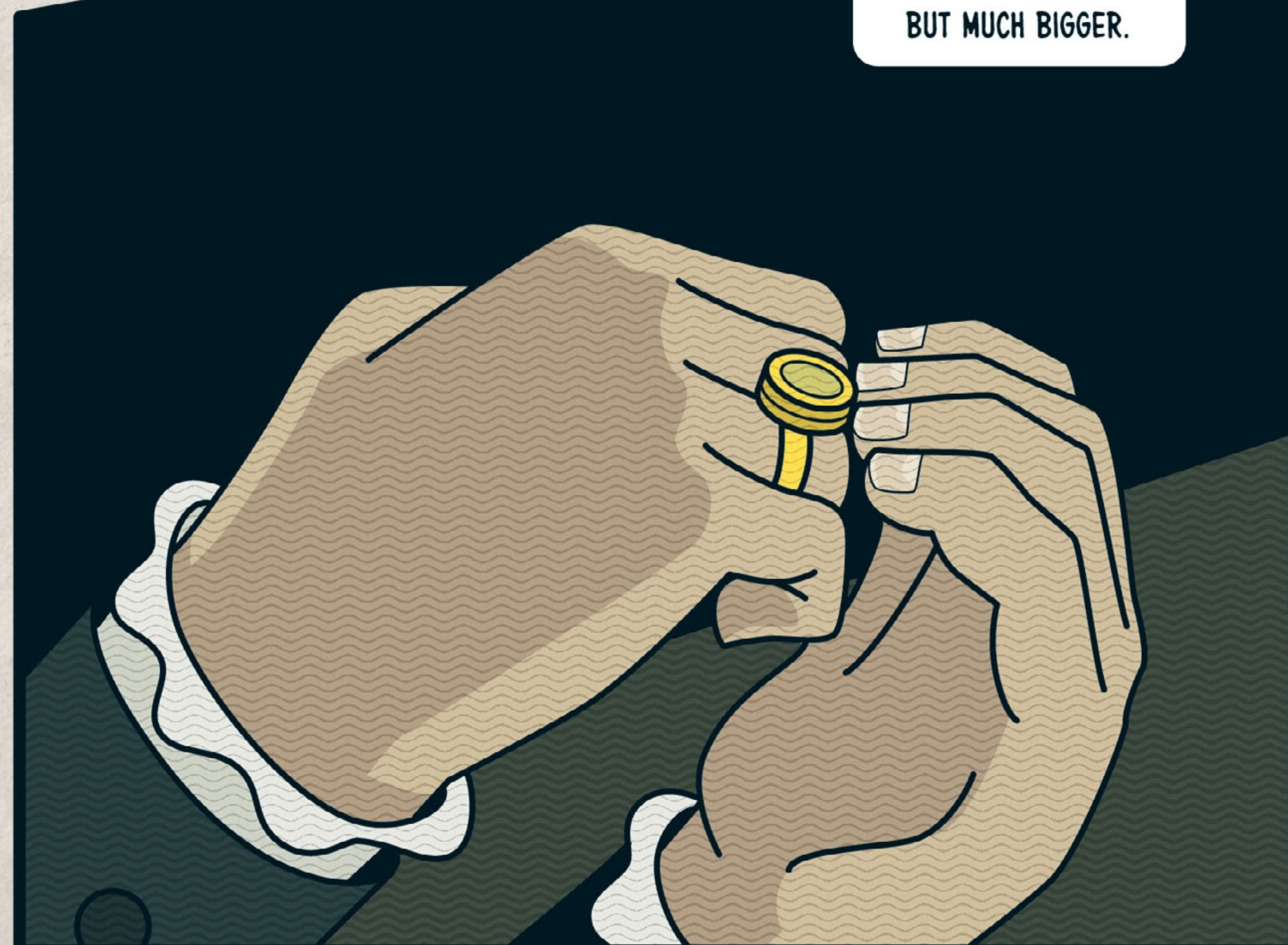
JIM AND OLIVIA
WERE HUSTLED
AWAY BY
THE GUARDS.



IT LOOKED LIKE JIM'S
BUT MUCH BIGGER.



HADES SMILED AND
SLOWLY TWISTED
THE RING ON
HIS FINGER.





DOWN THE HALL CAME THE
SOUND OF SHOES CLACKING
ACROSS A STONE FLOOR.
FROM FAR AWAY,
A CAT MEOWED.

MEEEOOWWW

THE HALLWAY WAS
LINED WITH GLASS
JARS, WHICH STOOD
IN PERFECT SYMMETRY,
GLINTING IN THE
LOW LIGHT.

A FLASHLIGHT SWITCHED ON.
IT WAS PERSEPHONE,
SLOWLY MAKING HER WAY
DOWN THE ROWS.



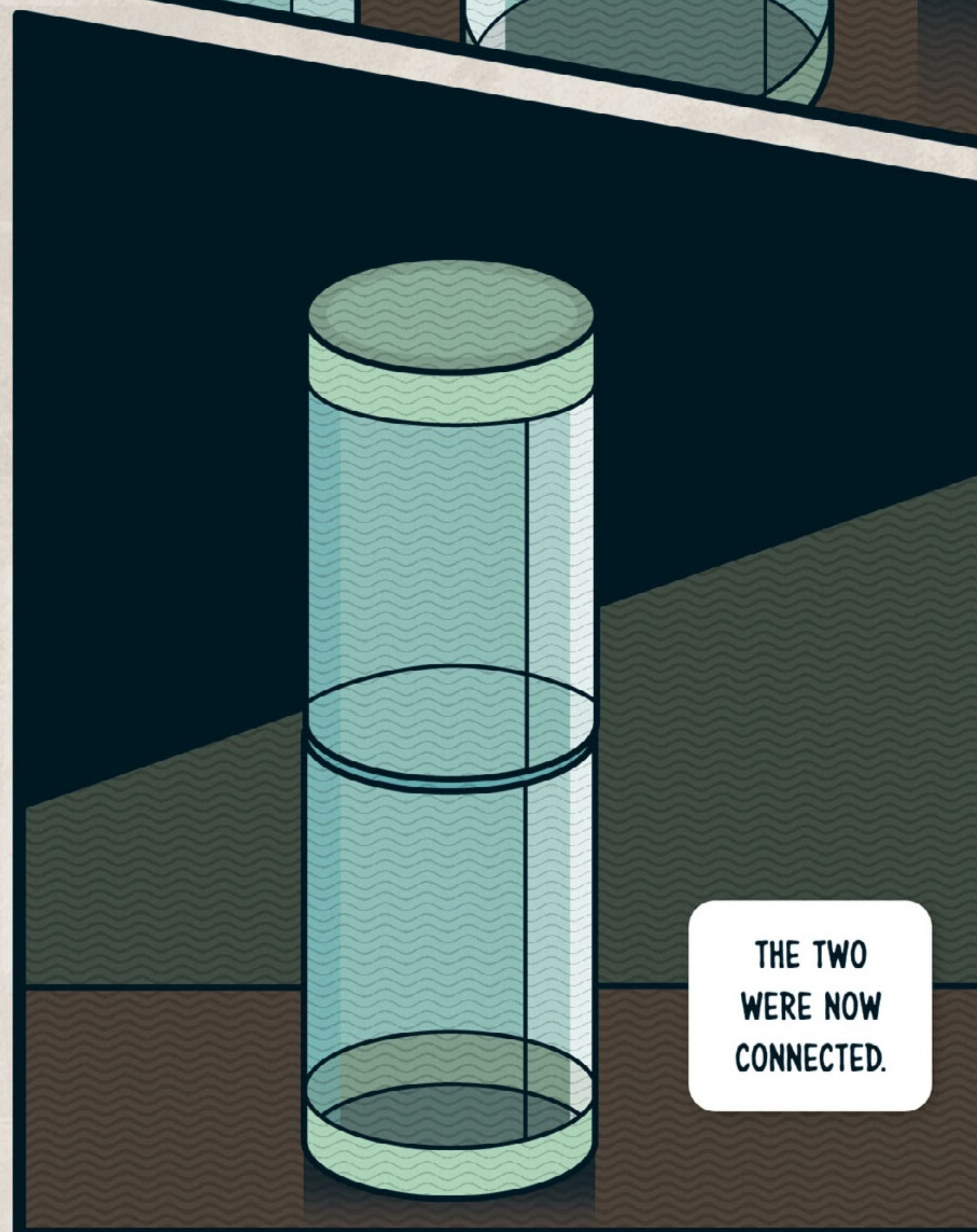
SHE CAME TO A STOP AND
DIRECTED HER LIGHT ONTO
A SMALL METAL TAG:
ROW 265, SHELF 4.



SHE REACHED UP AND
TOOK DOWN TWO JARS.



SHE UNSCREWED
BOTH LIDS
AND TURNED
THE FIRST JAR
ON TOP OF THE
SECOND ONE.



THE TWO
WERE NOW
CONNECTED.



SLIGHTLY
HEAVIER
THAN AIR.



AFTER A FEW MINUTES,
PERSEPHONE REMOVED
THE TOP JAR...



...AND QUICKLY
SCREWED BOTH
LIDS BACK ON.



HOLDING THE BOTTOM JAR
UP, SHE LOOKED IN AT THE
SLIGHTLY COLORED GAS
WAVING AROUND.

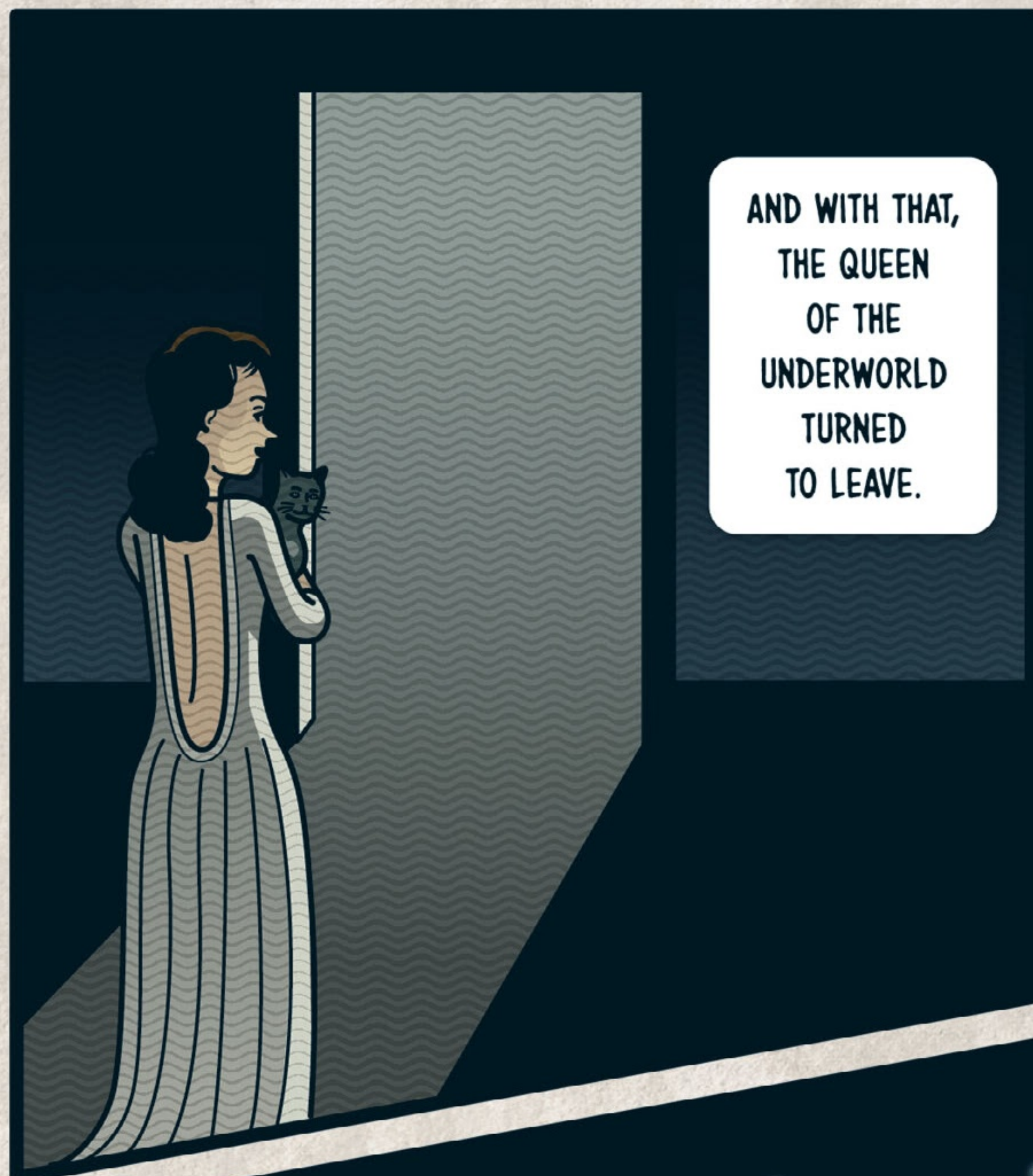


JOIN HANDS,
YOU LOVEBIRDS.

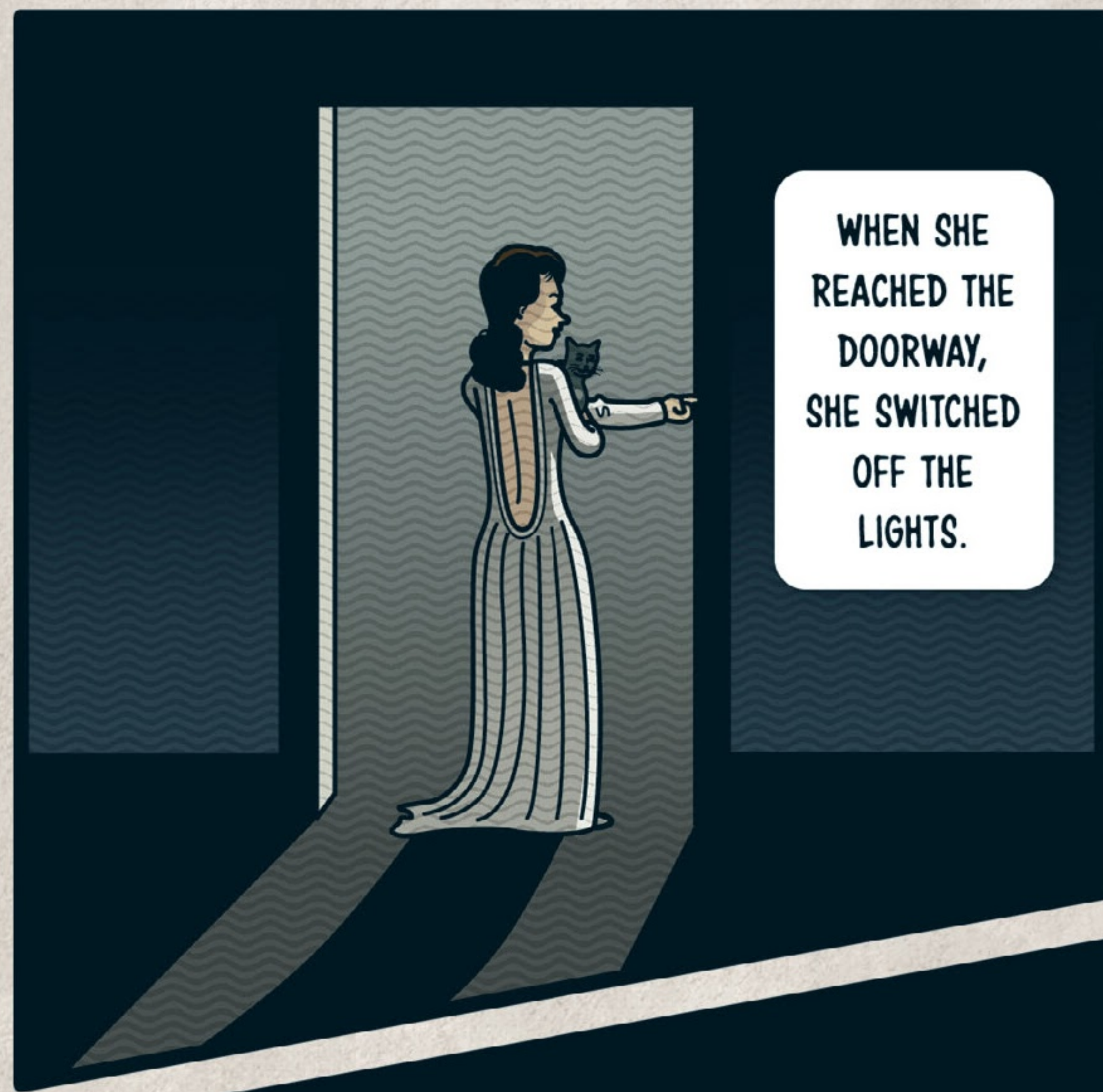
PERSEPHONE
BEGAN TO HUM
A TUNE. SHE
PICKED UP LUNA
AS SHE SANG
THE WORDS.



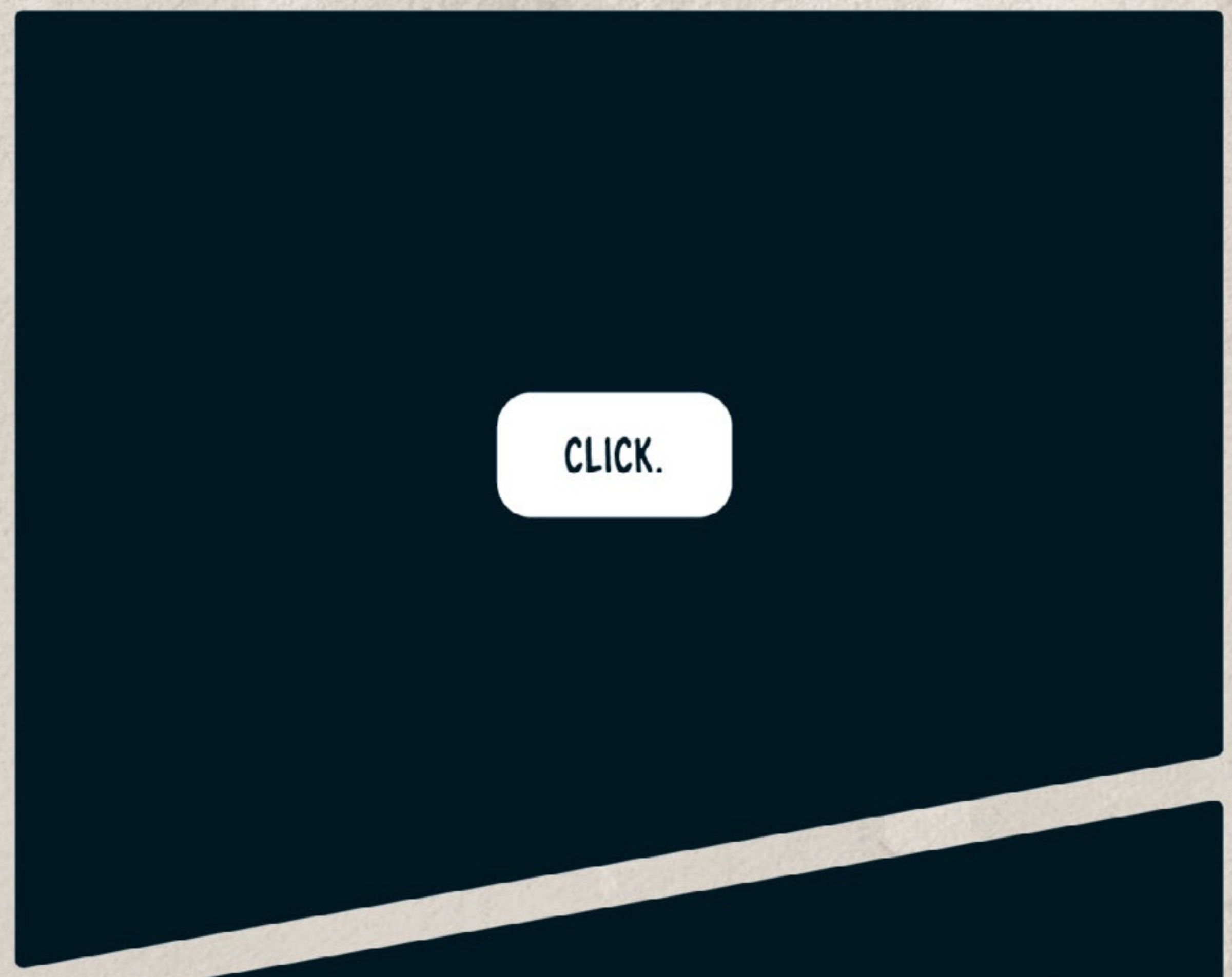
"AND SO IT SEEMS THAT WE HAVE MET BEFORE.
AND LAUGHED BEFORE. AND LOVED BEFORE.
♪ BUT WHO KNOWS WHERE OR WHEN?" ♪



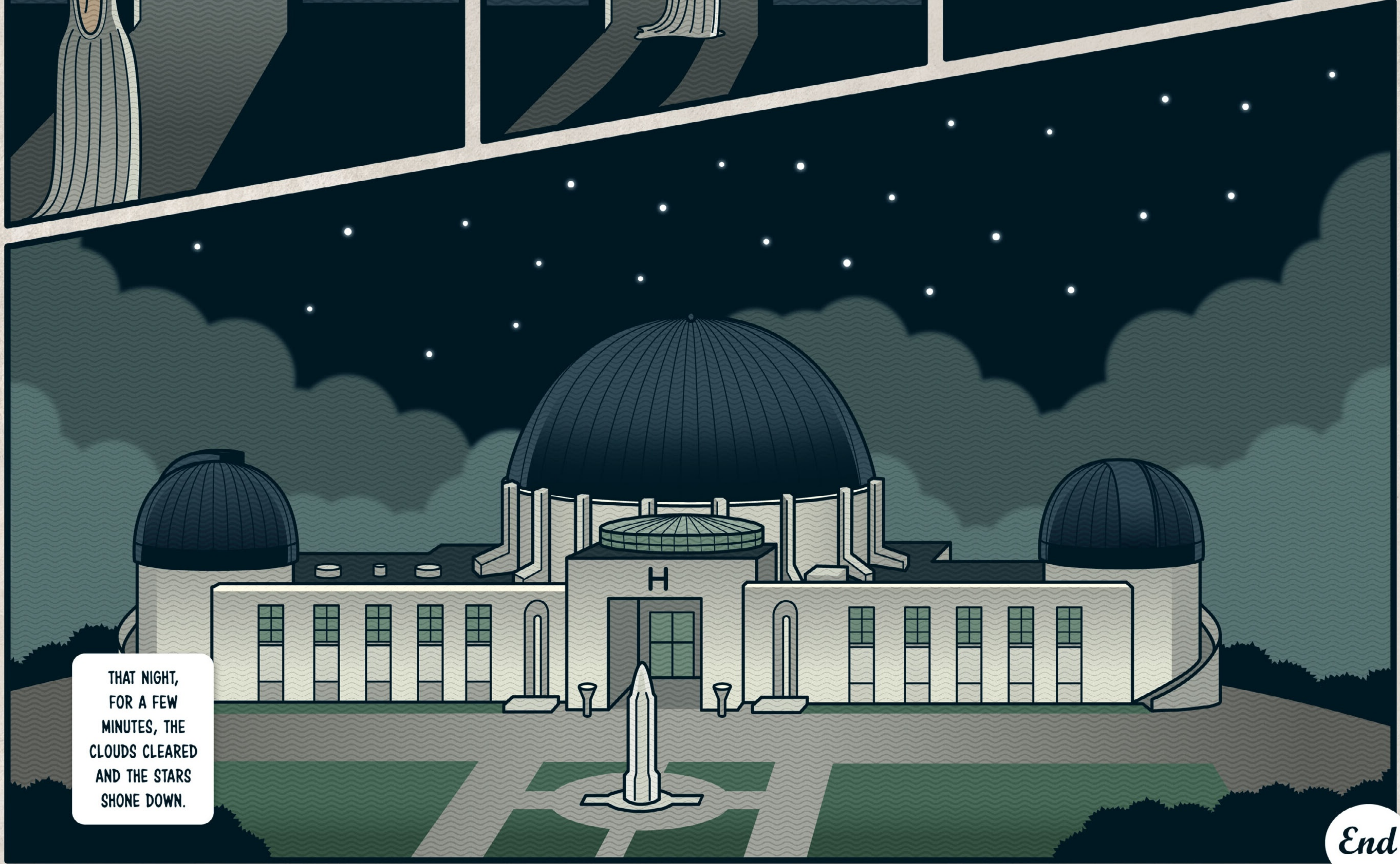
AND WITH THAT,
THE QUEEN
OF THE
UNDERWORLD
TURNED
TO LEAVE.



WHEN SHE
REACHED THE
DOORWAY,
SHE SWITCHED
OFF THE
LIGHTS.

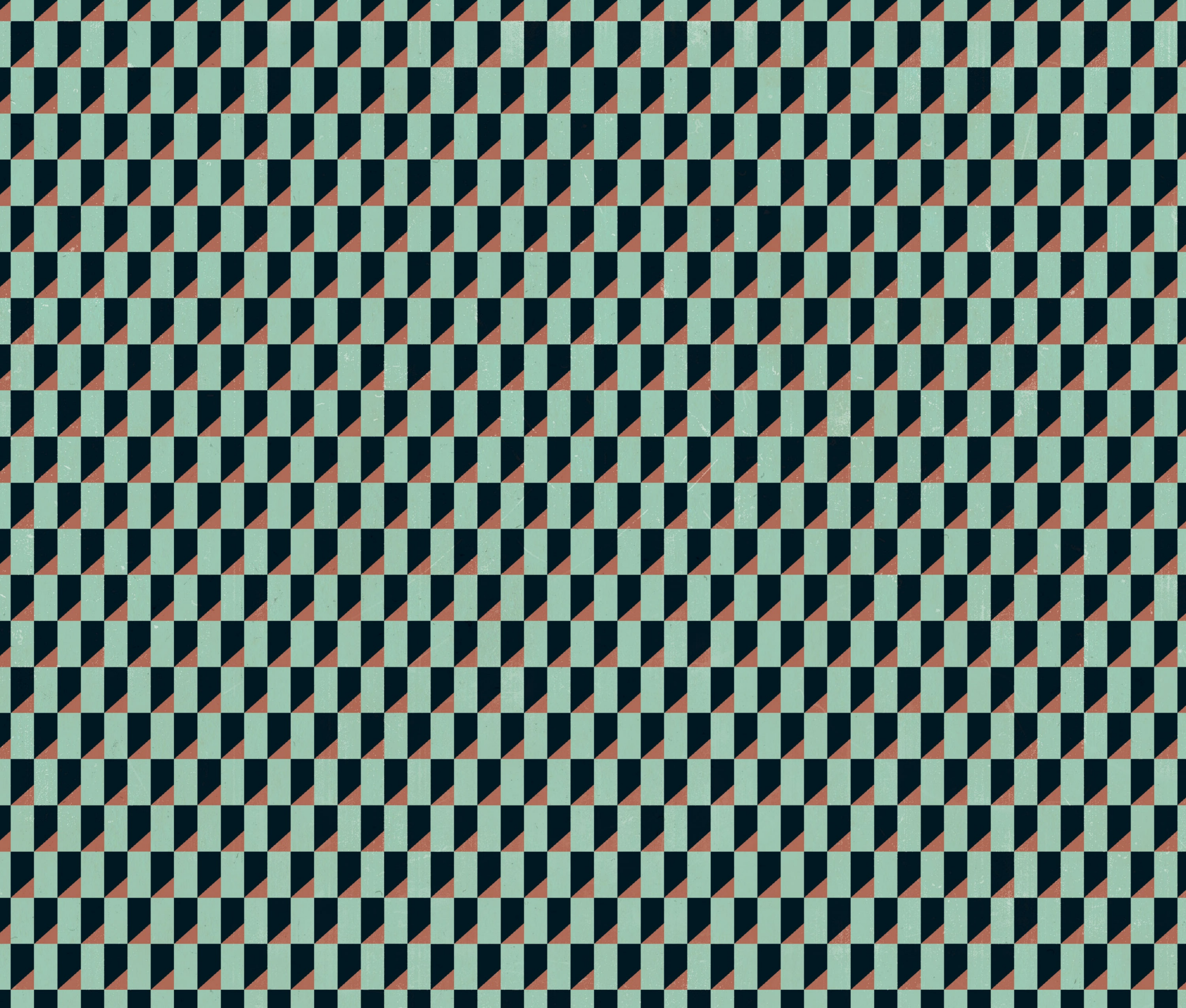


CLICK.



THAT NIGHT,
FOR A FEW
MINUTES, THE
CLOUDS CLEARED
AND THE STARS
SHONE DOWN.

End



A SURREAL SMUGGLING OPERATION ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES OF LIFE AND DEATH

“To read comics by Peter and Maria Hoey is to immerse oneself
in the limitless possibility of sequential art as a visual language.”

– Andy Oliver, *Broken Frontier*

